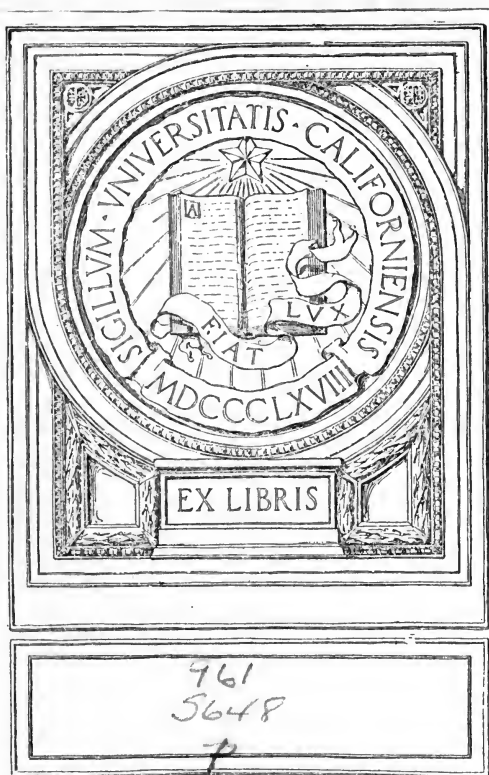


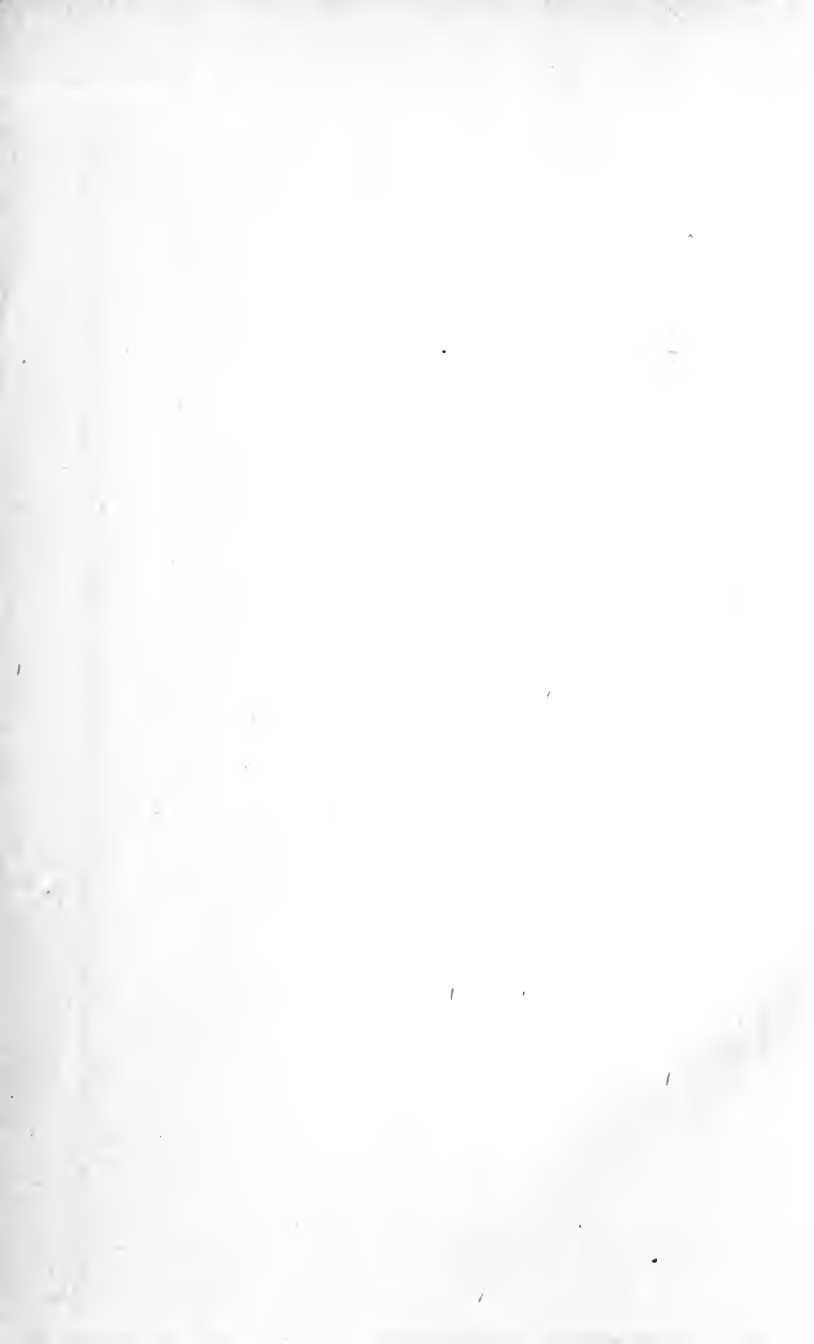
The Pagan

GORDON
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SMITH



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THE PAGAN

THE PAGAN

BY
GORDON ARTHUR SMITH



NEW YORK
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
1920

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THE
PAGAN

THE PAGAN

THE
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NEW YORK

THE PAGAN

WHEN Maxime Taillandy, senior partner of the firm of Taillandy, Mason & Co., had settled himself comfortably in his bed to die he summoned to him Peter Mason, the son of the junior partner. Previously, devout Catholic that he was, he had summoned a priest. Peter was an American lawyer in his thirties, whom the firm employed to extricate it from legal entanglements, both in New York and in Paris, for the company was international and not averse from making money on both sides of the Atlantic.

Maxime Taillandy, having lived honestly though successfully for threescore years and ten, was not afraid to die. If he regretted anything it was perhaps the fact that he was dying in the midst of the firm's most prosperous year; since the firm was to him as a babe to its mother—it had been born of his brain and fed by his hands; he had tended it in its illnesses and had rejoiced in its health.

Thus it followed that his daughter, Marthe, although she kept his house and shared his meals, was almost a stranger to him, while Peter Mason, on the contrary, inasmuch as he was intimately connected with the firm and its fortunes, stood well-nigh as his son.

"Peter," said Taillandy, from his huge, canopied bed, "I have several things to say before I become silent forever. God has granted me a long life and a prosperous one, and a clear brain at the last. Also, I am dying at home and I shall breathe with my last breath the air of my beautiful France. For all this I am thankful. Nevertheless, few of us can leave this pleasant world without an anxious thought or two for the future of the persons and things that have been dear to us."

The old man paused, and Peter, finding no reply, nodded sympathetically.

"Peter," Taillandy went on after a little, "I once had a son. You did not know that, did you? Few do. He was not like me—on the contrary, where I was black he was white, and where I was white he was black. Between us we could have made a chess-board of virtues and vices, and never have found ourselves on the same square. His virtues were his mother's—whom may the saints cherish in heaven! The poetry that she thought and dreamed he wrote down with pen and ink; the love of the beautiful that God deals sparingly to His creatures God gave in abundance to him. Tempestuous he was, yet gentle; self-indulgent, yet inspired. There—perhaps you have guessed his name. Six years ago it was one of the greatest in France."

Peter hesitated.

"Not Ferdinand Taillandy?" he said.

"Himself," replied the old man.

Peter was not compelled to strain his memory, for, unbidden, the names of two great poems came to his lips and he uttered them aloud.

"Le Triomphe de l'Amour and Le Tombeau de l'Amour," he said.

"Yes," answered Taillandy, and his voice was full of bitterness; "they well-nigh tell a story, those two titles, do they not? What is this love but a serpent that we clasp to our beasts only to have it sting us? It was the usual tale; so commonplace that we have come to shrug and to smile when it is told us. He fell in love with a beautiful girl—ah, but she was beautiful, and gentle—and I think she loved him after her fashion. Her great-grandfather had been brave with Bonaparte and had been made a baron. My son's great-grandfather, you see, was a peasant of Dijon and he, too, had fought under Bonaparte; but an Austrian had split his skull with a sabre at Austerlitz before the little Corsican could reward him. And so we are not of the nobility. Her parents opposed the match, for they were seeking more than my son had to offer. She gave him up without a struggle and scarce a tear, and he—his tears are all in that last poem of his, in every line, in every word!"

The old man choked and stopped. Peter waited quietly.

"I have not seen my son for six years," Tail-

landy continued, "but I believe that he is alive. When he left us he said that he was going to see if life was not something better than an ill-natured practical joke on man. Let me see—he was then thirty-one years old. Now he would be thirty-seven; just your age, Peter."

"You have not corresponded with him? He has written no one?" asked Peter.

"Not for six years—six years," he repeated slowly. "Six years is a long time, Peter; it seems a lifetime when one has but six days or six hours left to live."

"Ah," said Peter, "but you are not as near the end as that"—and then he stopped, for he saw that his encouragement was useless. A spasm of pain had shaken the old man's body, and dimly the spark of life shone in his eyes. That he had more to say was evident. The nurse poured a stimulant into a glass and held it to his lips. He continued haltingly, with great effort:

"You must find my son, Peter. I have left him all my fortune; all but enough to keep Marthe comfortably. If you can't find him within a year—if he is dead—it all goes to you. You are to marry Marthe and become a member of the firm. It is in my will—I will it so. You understand? That is all."

His head fell back on the pillow, but his lips still moved. Peter leaned close to hear his last words.

"Peter—they are cheating us on those silks from Lyons—the last ones—low quality——"
And so he died.

II

AFTER Taillandy's funeral a perturbed conference was held in his dark, echoing house in the rue de Grenelle. Maître Baresse, Taillandy's personal lawyer, was explaining to those directly concerned the terms of the will. Tension was in the air. Even Maître Baresse had permitted himself to express a regret that the document should be so quixotic.

"It is a little of the Middle Ages," was the phrase he had used.

His audience consisted of but two people, Marthe Taillandy and Peter Mason, and of the two Peter was the more confused, for Marthe was blessed with a temperament that enabled her to believe that everything was invariably for the best. At twenty-four she had the sturdy cheerfulness that is the dowry of every normal Frenchwoman.

"Thus," concluded Maître Baresse, "you perceive that in any case Mlle. Marthe receives the house and an annuity of twenty-five thousand francs. Monsieur Mason is to be paid the sum of sixty thousand francs at once to meet the expenses he will incur during the year in the search for young Monsieur Ferdinand Tail-

landy, whom I may designate as the heir to the residue of his father's fortune of twelve million francs. Should, however, the heir not be found or not present properly and in due form his claim within one year, the aforesaid twelve millions go to Monsieur Mason, but upon a condition: that he first marry Mlle. Marthe and enter as a partner into the firm of Taillandy, Mason & Co. May I remark, Monsieur Mason," the little old lawyer continued, peering at the American through watery eyes, "may I remark that this clause, especially, indicates either the remarkable trust reposed in you by the late Monsieur Taillandy or else the lamentable condition of his brain preceding his death?"

"You may so remark," returned Peter dryly.

Maître Baresse cleared his throat and resumed. "There is a final clause," he said, "which applies only in case Monsieur Ferdinand Taillandy should not be found and in case no marriage should be arranged between Monsieur Mason and Mlle. Marthe, as mentioned before. In such circumstances the twelve million francs go entirely and unreservedly to Mlle. Marthe. Have I made myself clear? I trust so. First, Monsieur Ferdinand; then, if Monsieur Ferdinand be not found, Monsieur Mason, on condition that he marries Mlle. Marthe——"

"Poor Peter," said Marthe, speaking for the first time since the lawyer had held the floor.

"Poor Peter, what a price father is making you pay to become his heir."

"Nonsense," said Peter, flushing. "There is no question of that. Your brother is certainly alive, and it remains but to find him. Your brother once found, the will is reasonable and precise."

"Yes," said Marthe, "the complications would arise only upon failure to find him."

"There shall be no such failure," said Peter sturdily.

"I felicitate you, monsieur, on your generous attitude," said Maître Baresse, rising painfully to his feet. "It remains for me now but to bid you *au revoir* and *bonne chance*. This has been a very sad affair for all of us—especially for you, Mlle. Marthe—and the added factor of this—er—fanciful testament is not the least of the disturbing elements. If I can be of any further assistance—my card. Allow me. Good day."

"Thank heaven!" said Peter, when the door had closed behind the back of the lawyer's shiny coat. "Thank heaven, we are rid of him. Now, Marthe, perhaps you and I can come to some conclusions. Have you any proposal to make?"

"That," said Marthe, smiling, "is for you to do if you want the twelve million."

Peter's face became very serious.

"Has it occurred to you," he said, "that the conditions of this will are most annoying?"

"Why?" asked Marthe.

"Suppose," said Peter, "that we do not find your brother within a year."

"Suppose we do not," replied Marthe; "what then?"

"Then," said Peter, "why then the twelve million is to go to me——"

"Not unless you marry me first," corrected Marthe smoothly.

"Just so," said Peter; "you see the difficulty?"

"The difficulty!" echoed Marthe. "What difficulty? Don't you want to marry me? Wouldn't you marry me for twelve million francs?"

Peter blushed mightily.

"You *know* I want to marry you, Marthe," he said. "I have told you that often enough, long before I was offered twelve million to do it. That is just the difficulty—that from now on I am being offered twelve million to do it."

"I see," said Marthe. "You mean that you feel you are being bribed. I should hate to have you stop proposing, Peter; but perhaps," she continued, visibly amused, "perhaps father knew what was best."

"It's monstrous," Peter cried. "Of course your father did it for the sake of the firm. I know that he wanted the company that bore his name to grow, to expand, to advance—to live long after he and his children and their children had ceased to live. But me—why did

he choose me? He leaves me in such a position that I cannot ask you to marry me without apparently reaching for the twelve million."

"If my brother is not found and if I should refuse to marry you," said Marthe, "why, then, the money is mine, is it not?"

"Certainly," said Peter.

Marthe laughed.

"How amusing," she said. "Don't you see that in such a case I could not refuse any offer of marriage you might make to me without appearing to be greedy for the twelve million for myself?"

Peter started.

"By the gods," he said slowly, "that's true. I had not thought of that."

"So you see, Peter," she continued, "there is only one solution: we must find my brother Ferdinand. Otherwise I should feel honor-bound to marry you."

"Yes," said Peter, "*we must*. Otherwise I should feel honor-bound not to ask you."

III

ALL the usual machinery employed in tracing lost persons was at once put into motion: advertisements in most of the papers of France and in many foreign ones; rewards for news of the missing man; a corps of detectives who

promised much, hinted much, speculated much, suspected much, and accomplished nothing.

Thus, with no progress to report, winter melted to spring and spring warmed to summer and autumn was upon them. In the end it remained for luck and Peter, abetted by a suggestion from Marthe, to hit upon the one clew that was obtained.

The suggestion emanated from Marthe in this wise. It was a bronze October day, and she and Peter were walking together in the Avenue du Bois. Often they had dared this, for Marthe had no one to elude but a myopic spinster aunt; and Peter, being an American, thought nothing of conventions.

It was October, I have said, and cold, with a sharp little breeze that whipped Marthe's skirts about in a lively fashion, and roused bright color to her cheeks, and drove reluctant clouds pell-mell across a serene sky like fat, rollicking white puppies. Peter did not fail to observe that Marthe looked very alluring in the wind.

"Peter," said she, half-way to the Bois, "we are not progressing. Something radical must be done."

"Right," said Peter; "but what?"

"I have been thinking," replied Marthe, "of the places my brother used to frequent before he left us. Every true Frenchman, you know, has his café, and I seem to remember that Ferdinand's was called the Closerie des Lilas and

was on the Boulevard du Montparnasse. Is it not just possible that there you might meet some of his old-time cronies who could give you some hint?"

"It is worth trying," said Peter. "What sort of folk go there?"

"Artists and writers in embryo, and men with dreams or ambitions or both."

"I have both," said Peter. And he went.

He went not only once but several times, and each time he came away empty-handed; which was not strange. Still he persevered, for the little café came to exert a certain fascination over him. It seemed to him to be the Ararat of a world flooded with lost illusions. Here, as Marthe had indicated, was genius in embryo and youth to whom no tradition was too sacred to be shattered. One day he was rewarded.

He had seated himself at a marble-topped table, where the smoke was thickest, ordered a *vermouth à l'eau*, and started to look about him. On his right *écarté* was being played by two and watched by half a dozen unkempt, bearded artists. On his left it was backgammon. The odor of French tobacco was everywhere. Opposite, across the narrow room, he noticed a gaunt, sallow young fellow with something of the glint of genius in his eyes and a toothpick in his mouth. He was haranguing a group of painters and writers, using many superlatives and a liberal allowance of gesture;

and his audience expressed their approval as often as he paused for applause. Soon his voice rose above the ordinary murmur of conversation, and his fist banged the clattering table-top as he emphasized his climax.

"C'est du chiqué," he cried; *"c'est du chiqué!"* All—all of it is a fraud! All of it is gilded papier-maché. Literature and art, too, I tell you, are ruined by your realists, your naturalists, your symbolists. You here, Baptiste, you that call yourself a realist, what good have you accomplished; what can you point to? Double species of idiot, you have studied the dirt in the streets when you might have been studying the stars in the skies; you have wallowed in filth—realistic filth, if you will—when you should have been seeking nymphs in the glades and listening to the pipes of Pan. What we must do to save ourselves is to revert. To romanticism? No; too sickly sweet. To classicism? No, not quite; too artificial, too severe. To paganism? Yes! a thousand times, yes! There and only there do we see Beauty naked but unashamed. The worship of Beauty, of Beauty in the sky, in the hills, in the waters, in the trees, in the eyes of women, and in the hearts of men. Gautier approached it in *'Mlle. de Maupin'*; an Englishman, Swinburne, came nearer; and one of us, I tell you, one of us was almost at the goal when his light was extinguished. Yes, Ferdinand Taillandy, had he stayed with us, would have been the leader of

the greatest school of literature the world has known."

There was a moment of silence succeeding this grandiloquent oration, and then Peter's right-hand neighbor, he who was playing at *écarté*, said with sincerity and real feeling: "*Ce pauvre Ferdinand!* We miss him much, we who knew him and loved him."

It was Peter's opportunity; a better he could not have wished for. Turning to his neighbor he said in his excellent French: "Monsieur, you will pardon, I trust, the interruption of a stranger, but I read in the earnestness of your tone a true regard for Ferdinand Taillandy."

"But, yes," said the other, "you have reason to say it, monsieur."

"I myself," said Peter, "while not one of his family, share their interest and anxiety with regard to his whereabouts; for his father, dying, employed his last breath to urge me to bring back his son into the world. You have doubtless seen the advertisements and the rewards. They have been useless, all useless. It is eight months that we have been seeking him in vain, and I no longer know what to do or where to turn; so I came in here to-day, knowing that here he also had been accustomed to come and hoping to meet some one of his friends who might help me. Am I to be disappointed? Is there nothing you can tell me?"

The man shook his head sadly.

"No, monsieur," he said, "I am afraid I can

tell you nothing. None of us here knows anything that could be of help to you. But stop! Have you seen Germaine D'Arcy, of the Théâtre des Capucines? No? Well, it is just possible that if you approached her tactfully and delicately she could tell you more than any one else in Paris. She used to come here with him often toward the last, when he was desperate, you know. I believe she is the only person in the city who knows where he disappeared to."

"Germaine D'Arcy?" repeated Peter.

"Yes," said the other dryly; "her name describes her. When Taillandy first knew her she was a *couturière* and was called Zizi; but you had best not remind her of those days: '*autre temps, autres mœurs.*'"

"I understand," said Peter gratefully; "you mean she has prospered since then?"

"Exactly," replied the other; "she has triumphed completely. But she has forgotten us, her old friends, and her father is still a floor-walker at the Bon-Marché."

Peter thanked him profusely, paid his check, and left.

"Well," he said to himself, as he blinked in the bright sunlight outside, "it seems as though the great paganist school of literature might recover its leader after all; for to-morrow I hitch my wagon to a star—of the Théâtre des Capucines."

IV

Mlle. GERMAINE D'ARCY was accustomed to see her name in twelve-inch letters on the Paris bill-boards. She was one of a score of *artistes* (the term is flattering) who have risen to glory by means of a taking face and a speaking leg. She could not act nor sing nor dance. Dance?—she could not have bent to fasten her slipper, but she possessed what the French call *la ligne*. Also she had been frequently photographed; she had worn the right clothes at Chantilly and at Longchamps, and she had advertised and recommended every known toilet article but a safety razor. Nevertheless, or perhaps therefore, Germaine D'Arcy was nobody's fool.

Peter, not being to that manner born, was somewhat at a loss how he might best approach her. Finally, abandoning better but more complicated methods of attack, he presented himself at the Théâtre des Capucines after the evening performance and, having scribbled "A Crazy American Millionaire" on his card, sent it back to Mlle. D'Arcy. After an impressive interval he was admitted to the presence of the Queen.

Germaine was seated at her dressing-table, clad in yellow silk and much white lace. She was removing her stage make-up, and Peter

was vouchsafed only a view of her back as she leaned toward her mirror, patting her face with tapering, white fingers—fingers so patrician as to be constant negations of her plebeian birth.

"Give yourself the pain to sit down," she said without turning. "I shall be ready suddenly. You see I speak the English."

"Astoundingly," said Peter, and seated himself gingerly on an inefficient Empire chair.

A neat maid appeared, silks rustled, laces flounced, slim arms clutched the air, a thousand hooks clicked merrily, and Germaine arose, dressed, radiant, and smiling. She held out her left hand, heavy with pearls, and said brightly: "Supper?"

"Ah," said Peter gallantly, "do goddesses eat? How banal!"

"Dancing gives me the appetite," she replied with a smile that did credit to her dentifrice.

Since she considered supper inevitable, Peter took her to the Abbaye, a small restaurant in the Place Pigalle, all green and white and electric-light color. Crowds were seated at the tables along the *banquettes* and in the middle of the room; white shoulders and whiter shirt-fronts gleamed through tobacco-smoke; more crowds at the entrance waiting for tables; waiters jostling indiscriminately; fantastically dressed dancing girls, brandishing silken legs and singing to castanets; frantic, red-coated Hungarian musicians, pounding and scraping

at 'delirious strings, and an all-pervading odor of smoke, of champagne, and of expensive perfumes.

Peter smiled grimly.

"This," said he to himself, "is not quite the place I should have chosen for my purpose, and yet——?"

Mlle. Germaine D'Arcy obtained a table immediately. Mr. Peter Mason might have emptied his pockets in vain bribes; for the rule at the Abbaye is "No favoritism except to the favorites."

If the lady beside him entertained any curiosity as to Peter or as to his motives in presenting himself, she did not choose to betray it. Their conversation at first dwelt mainly on what they should eat and drink. Germaine ordered fastidiously and superciliously, choosing by instinct or by experience the more expensive dishes, and Peter could not but note, with some amusement, that she ate enormously and with little skill. Her Junoesque eyes travelled incessantly about the room, and she bowed and smiled to several celebrities. Princes and poets bowed low in return. The more recognition she received the more condescending did her manner toward Peter become, until in some mysterious way she managed to convey to him the feeling that she considered him socially her inferior. With pains she named to him her acquaintances: the Prince of Beringen-Schöenberg; the Conte Montalbi; René de Courcy,

the famous young dramatist; the Marquis de la Croix-Argentin; Henri Saint-Giseaux, who made the champagne they were drinking, and so forth, *et cetera*.

At length, from being overbored, Peter became vexed. He played his ace of trumps and waited to take the trick.

"By the way," he said in French, lazily and casually; "by the way, Zizi, what do you hear from our friend Ferdinand Taillandy?"

A large slice of a large pear, half-way to Germaine's mouth, never reached its destination; and Germaine's doll-like eyes narrowed with suspicion not unmixed with anger. She directed one sharp glance at Peter and then kept her eyes from his face. Her reply, when it came, was concise.

"Mon Dieu," she said, "you certainly *are* a crazy American millionaire."

"Am I not?" said Peter smoothly; and then, after a silence: "Do you never regret those days of the *Lilas—sans princes et sans perles?*"

For a brief moment Germaine's rouge was superfluous.

"Why did you not tell me at once that you were one of us—that you knew Ferdinand?"

"Because," said Peter, "I knew better."

"You think I would have refused to see you, refused to talk with you?"

"I do," said Peter.

Germaine nodded her head slowly.

"You were right," she said. "Nevertheless,

I was very fond of Ferdinand; he was different from these others. He was a great poet and yet he had a *chic*—he was presentable. I have met but few clever men who dress themselves well. It is strange, is it not?"

"Wrinkles in the brow and in the clothes go hand in hand," said Peter.

"What?" said Germaine. "Oh, never mind; do not explain it. What was I saying? Oh, yes—poor Ferdinand. He would not have enjoyed it here. He liked better the *Lilas*, where every one was a friend. Do you remember the way he used to pound on the table for my beer? '*Garçon, une brune pour cette petite blonde!*' I always drank dark beer, you see, and my hair was quite golden then. But you?—I do not remember you. Did you go there often?"

"No," said Peter, "I have been there very seldom; but I am very anxious to help Ferdinand. You know, of course, that there is twelve million francs waiting for him to claim?"

"Yes," replied Germaine; "I have heard."

"Well, he has not appeared to claim it. We have been searching for him for eight—nearly nine months now. We do not know if he is alive. Can you help us?"

Germaine was silent.

"If he wants the twelve million," she said at length, "why does he not come forward and claim it? He must have seen your advertisements."

"Yes," replied Peter, "if he is alive. But is he alive?"

"I do not know—how should I know?" she said quickly. Then, apparently veering, she added: "Yes, he is alive. At least, he was two weeks ago."

Peter was at some pains not to betray his pleasure. "And where is he, then?" he asked.

"Oh," Germaine continued, "I will tell you all I know because I hope it will benefit him. Only I do not want you to think that you have been exceptionally clever; that would be a mistake. No, I tell you of my own free will. Also, will you order me a *Pêche Melba*? I have a little hunger still. Yes, Ferdinand is of the sort who should have money. For six years, now, he has lived on nothing—almost nothing. He has written to me once every month during those six years. I don't know why; perhaps he likes me. Never has he allowed me to write to him; never has he given me an address. But I have followed him by the post-marks on the envelopes. Wherever he goes he walks, and in those six years he has been to Austria, to Germany, to Greece, to Italy, and just now to Spain. He is writing an epic; I do not know what that is, but I think it is poetry. He is sometimes very droll. He says he is seeking the gods in their own haunts—in the forests, he means, and in the streams and the oceans. Constantly he is talking about these gods and goddesses: Jupiter and Neptune, and, of course,

that marble one in the Louvre—in the Musée, I mean, not in the Grand Magasin. Especially, though, he mentions one woman—Diana. ‘Some day,’ he says, ‘I, too, like Actæon, shall surprise her bathing.’ He is like that. Often I cannot understand what he means. Now he is walking from Spain along through France by the Mediterranean. The last letter I received, two weeks ago, was from Marseilles. By now he should be in the Riviera. You might find him there. That is all I know—all I can tell you.”

“I am very, very grateful,” said Peter. “Won’t you have another peach?”

“No,” said Germaine; “I am *complète*. I hope you will find him. He deserves to be rich, and it may help him with his epic.”

“It may,” said Peter. “And now,” he went on, “there is one thing more, if you will pardon me for mentioning money in your presence. A substantial reward has been offered for information leading to the discovery of Ferdinand. This, of course, will be yours if I succeed now in tracing him.”

“How much is it?” asked Germaine.

“Twenty thousand francs.”

She smiled abstractedly, playing with the rings on her hands.

“Mon Dieu,” she replied, with a shrug; “I have that much on my little finger.”

V

PETER went to Monte Carlo. What perhaps was strange was that Marthe and her myopic aunt went, too.

"I can be useful," Marthe declared, "in detecting impostors. You have never seen Ferdinand; I have."

The myopic aunt went apparently because she had to; but inwardly she had a longing to play the red and double. She had never gambled before.

During the first month of their stay Peter saw a score of Ferdinand Taillandys, none of whom, however, finally proved satisfactory. At first he was cautious and discreet, employing many circumlocutions in snaring his prey; but later, becoming reckless, he startled several honest, God-fearing people by asking them point-blank if they were not the missing poet. One or two, who had heard of the waiting fortune, acknowledged that they were, and it remained for Marthe to assure them of their mistake.

The end of the year brought with it the anniversary of old Taillandy's death, and his son was still at large. It was actually on the last day of the term that Peter believed that he had finally discovered the elusive heir. It happened thus:

Peter, after a hasty glance through the

gambling-rooms, had gone out to the sunny terrace behind the Casino to smoke in peace a long cigar. He settled himself on a bench and blinked happily in the sunlight. The air came fresh and salt off the sea, which rose beneath him, a mass of gleaming lazulite, to meet the sky at the unbroken bow of the horizon. Peter sat back and enjoyed it, and tainted the breeze with his cigar.

Then some one spoke at his elbow.

"Leisure for meditation," some one said, "is the greatest gift the gods have to bestow. You, monsieur, I perceive, are unusually blessed."

Peter turned to find that a shabby-looking person, having appropriated the other half of the bench, was sprawling luxuriously in his seat, his long, lean legs stretched out straight in front of him and a cigarette held debonairly in a pair of nicotine-stained fingers. He was dressed in an ill-fitting, much-patched brown suit, which hung on his lank frame in baggy folds and creases. His left hand was thrust deep in his trousers pocket, and his coat, being thus thrown back, revealed a blue corduroy waistcoat held together precariously by occasional vermilion buttons. His cravat, of green silk, was knotted around a low, soft collar, immaculately white. A gray felt hat was perched jauntily on one side of his head, and through a jagged hole in its crown Peter could see a tangle of hair, black as an Indian's, one lock of which hung down straight over his right eyebrow.

"You are regarding my hat with ill-concealed admiration, I perceive. Doubtless you are amazed at such excessive ventilation, which, though not strictly fashionable, is excellent for the hair. Men wear hats in order to remove them for women. I know no women, so I compromise."

Peter regarded the man blankly. He was speaking excellent English, with scarcely enough French accent to proclaim his nationality. His linen, his hands, and his speech argued for his refinement, and a glance at his face confirmed it. A thin, delicate nose; a pair of brown eyes, rather dull and listless, and hinting at suffering undergone; heavy, black brows; a sensitive mouth, curved crookedly in an amused smile, which displayed his regular, white teeth; a narrow, pointed chin projecting somewhat like that of the notorious Punch—all set in a thin, drawn face, high as to cheek-bones, and bronzed as dark as an Arab's.

Peter checked his first impulse to rise and leave. Later he was exceedingly glad that he had done so. He murmured something to the effect that, since it was his first trip to Monte Carlo, he was taking advantage of a leisure hour to admire the view from the terrace. The other stopped him with a motion of his hand.

"Why explain?" he said. "You Anglo-Saxons are curious people; you actually are ashamed to be idle—physically idle, I mean. Does it never occur to you that thinking is a

praiseworthy occupation? 'Man is of the earth, but his thoughts are with the stars.' Did not your Carlyle say that? Ah, there was a man who knew how to think!"

"Are you fond of Carlyle's work?" asked practical Peter, amazed.

"Am I fond of Carlyle's work!" the other echoed. "Is one *fond* of the 'Odyssey' of Homer, the 'Hermes' of Praxiteles, or the 'Tristan' of Wagner? You have ill-chosen your verb. Carlyle was a man of beautiful mind, of beautiful thoughts, just as were Homer and Praxiteles and Wagner. I do not mean by that that they saw everything the color of roses; rather do I mean that they saw the truth and that the gods gave them the power to reveal its beauty."

"I see," said Peter vaguely.

"Yes," the other continued, "the beauty of Truth and the truth of Beauty; they are two strings that have been much fiddled on, but they are still a-tune. Poor Beauty—she is becoming a shy goddess since the days of this—" and he waved a contemptuous hand toward the Casino.

"Surely," said Peter, "there is beauty spread lavishly enough before us even here. What of the sea?"

"Truly," said the other, "there is Beauty in the sea. Are not half a hundred nereids there to keep it smiling? But one's soul must be in tune if the chords are to ring true. Do you know what it is to be out of tune with Beauty?"

It is to have faith, hope, happiness, ambition, and love turn to gray ashes in your heart. Six years ago that happened to me in a day. The senses that the gods give to poets in their fullest perfection were torn from me. The sun coming up in the morning, yonder in the east, trailing its delicate, golden-edged clouds like a gypsy's veils; the surge of the sea, the voices of the birds, the eternal song of Nature; the scent of the roses climbing smilingly about the stucco walls—the three senses on which my very existence depended, sight, hearing, and smell, were powerless to quicken my heart. That was six years ago. My mind lay paralyzed and my soul lay dead. Poetry—bah! I crucified my talent.”

He paused and a soft land breeze, bearing the sound of violins from the plaza, stirred the palms and the plane-trees in the groves behind them. From below rose the incessant wash of the sea.

When he spoke again all the bitterness had left his voice.

“At first,” he said, “I lived in a dream. Animal-like, I shunned the cities and sought the open to breathe. Gradually Nature drew me to her and soothed me. I rested in the groves where the dryads played; I bathed in the streams of the naiads; I hunted in the forests of Artemis, and Pan played to me on his pipes. And one day I drank of the spring of the Camenæ and, behold, they gave me back my gift.

Is there not an epic there?—something regained that is perhaps greater than paradise?"

At the mention of the epic Peter's suspicions were transmuted to certainty. His pulses pounded wildly with excitement.

"Do you never read the newspapers?" he cried.

The poet regarded him quizzically.

"I am sorry I have bored you," he said, and rose as though to move away.

"No, no," said Peter; "I must ask you to pardon me. You misunderstand."

"You asked me if I ever read the newspapers, did you not? I fail to see any relevance, but if you desire an answer: no, I do not."

"I did not intend to be rude," said Peter hurriedly; "indeed, I have the keenest interest in all that you have been telling me. May I add that I think I know your name? Are you not Ferdinand Taillandy?"

"I am," said the other; "and what then?"

"Then," cried Peter triumphantly; "then, may I shake your hand? You are the man I have been looking for for twelve months."

"You may shake my hand with pleasure," said the poet, "if that will console you for having wasted a year of your life. I am scarcely worth it."

"My dear man," exclaimed Peter, "you are worth twelve million."

"Twelve million what?" asked the other.

"Francs," said Peter.

The poet shrugged his shoulders and asked for further enlightenment. Peter was ten minutes explaining, while the other listened unmoved.

"What should I do with twelve million francs?" he inquired at the end. "Suppose I refuse them; what becomes of them then?"

"Then," said Peter, embarrassed, "they go to me on certain conditions."

"In that case," said the poet, "you would appear to be an honest man. You are actually pleased to have found me and to lose a fortune thereby. I congratulate you and I congratulate myself, for Diogenes would have envied me exceedingly. It is a delight to know that the virtues still exist among mortals who live in cities. And now, my friend," he continued, "what is it you wish me to do? You wish me first, I take it, to see my sister. Where is she?"

"At the Hôtel de Paris," said Peter.

"Ah, yes," mused the other; "purple and fine linen. You perceive how impossible it would be for me? I wear clothes because the law requires it, and I prize my liberty; but you see what they are——?"

"That," said Peter hastily, "is the least of difficulties," and he pressed a bank-note into the other's hand.

"After all, it is yours, you see," he explained; "and in Monte Carlo you can at least find clothes. Everything is for sale in Monte Carlo."

The poet hesitated a while, and then thrust the note into a pocket of his ragged coat.

"You are right," he said; "in Monte Carlo everything is for sale." And, he added bitterly: "Everything—even a man's freedom."

Peter, bursting with his discovery, sought Marthe wildly about the hotel and the gambling-rooms, to find her at last, in company with the myopic aunt, sipping lemonades through hygienic straws on the terrace of the Café de Paris.

"He is found," cried Peter from afar, waving his hat. "There is no mistake this time."

"Bravo!" said Marthe, but coolly, for the same tale had been told before.

"I am so sorry," said the myopic aunt, peering at Peter through half an inch of glass lorgnon.

"He is charming," said Peter, torrential with news. "He is cultivated, refined, unworldly, intellectual——"

"Did you give him any money?" asked Marthe practically. Several of the self-acknowledged Ferdinands that Peter had discovered had received and spent considerable sums, borrowed from him on various pretexts, before Marthe had had a chance to disclaim relationship with them. Peter hesitated and blushed.

"You see," he said, "he was not very well dressed and, as he is to meet us here, I thought——"

"Much?" asked Marthe, smiling.

"He didn't want to accept it," said Peter, "but I forced a thousand francs on him for clothes and things, you know."

"Mon Dieu," exclaimed the myopic aunt, "a thousand francs! That is more than I have won on the red in four weeks."

"But," continued Peter, "there is no doubt this time—he had absolute proofs; and he told me all about himself before I hinted that I was looking for him."

"What did he tell you?" asked Marthe, still unconvinced.

"That he was writing a great epic poem; that he had been living away from the world for a long time; and then he talked a lot about those pagan gods of his, you know. Oh, he is genuine, right enough."

"Well," said Marthe, with a sigh, "I hope so, since this is the last day of the year. If he is not found to-day all that money is yours, Peter, dear; that is, if you can make up your mind to marry me."

"Such a shame," said the myopic aunt; "but then, we will hope he is only another impostor."

"I hope no such thing," retorted Peter sturdily, "and I am sure he is not."

"How truly generous of you," sighed the myopic aunt. "And now I think that I shall leave you for a while. I *feel* that red is winning. How soon do you expect this person? In an hour? Well, I may be back."

"*Bonne chance*," said Marthe.

"It's that awful zero—" said the myopic aunt, shaking her head; and she collected her sack and her gloves and her parasol, and headed for the siren wheel.

"And now, Marthe," said Peter; "now that your brother is found, we are free. I am very glad; do you know how glad, Marthe?"

"Yes," said Marthe, playing nervously with the straws in her glass. "Yes, I know."

"If we had not found him," Peter went on, "it would have been horrible. As it is, I dare to tell you once more how much I love you, Marthe, and I can ask you to marry me with a clear conscience. Marthe, will you be my wife?"

"Peter," said Marthe slowly, "I would be your wife if your conscience were as black as the ace of spades. But you must not think that I do not appreciate how unselfish you have been. And Peter, dear, I think that father perhaps knew best—perhaps he was testing you. If he was you have won your degree *summa cum laude*," and she gave him her hand across the table.

"God bless you," said Peter, kissing her finger-tips. An interested waiter, counting his gains, forgot his figures and was forced to begin again. No one else noticed them.

As the afternoon advanced the tables about them filled rapidly with tea-drinking English and beer-drinking Germans; a red-coated

orchestra appeared, to drown at intervals the babel of tongues; laughter mixed merrily with the tinkle of glasses; waiters sprang into life with flying napkins, and the air rose warm from the ground, sweet with the scent of the neighboring flower-beds. Slowly the sun moved down the sky toward the west and the red roofs of Monaco. And still no Taillandy.

Peter glanced nervously at his watch. Half past four.

"He is late," he said.

"Yes, dear," said Marthe; "it takes time to spend a thousand francs. But, doubtless, when he comes he will be very beautiful."

At five o'clock, like them of Darien, they gazed at each other with a wild surmise. In vain did Marthe strive to keep her laughter down. It rang free and unashamed; and soon Peter joined her rather hollowly.

"Never mind, Peter," said Marthe; "it is only another Taillandy unmasked. And it is the last impostor we shall meet."

"Yes," replied Peter grimly; "the last one."

"And Peter, dear, it is not going to change anything between you and me. I will not allow it to. Tell me that that conscience of yours is quiet. You did your best, Peter."

"Yes," said Peter; "I did my best."

"And you deserve to win," she said.

"I think," said Peter softly, "that I have won a saint."

"You have," said Marthe; "but your saint

is filled with a very earthly love for this beautiful world and—for you.”

Down the steps of the Casino and across the sun-swept plaza came the myopic aunt.

“Well,” she demanded, peering about her, “where is he?”

“He did not come,” said Marthe.

The myopic aunt reached her chair with a sigh. “He did not come, *hein?* Well, neither did red.”

VI

A SHORT half-hour later, about half past five, when the long, wavering shadows were merged into the neutral tint of dusk and the bronze sun had died behind Monaco, the impostor stepped cautiously along the terrace where Peter had taken leave of him last. He was dressed as before—no better; but now he carried over his shoulder a roll of blankets and a knapsack was strapped to his back. He was accoutred like a French soldier on the march.

He paused by the terrace railing to glance at the quiet harbor below. Already, behind him, the lights were lit in the Casino, and in the Café de Paris the orchestra was playing to the last loitering guests. It was the hour of transition; the lull between the gayety of the afternoon and that of the evening, when good, fever-fearing people seek four walls and a roof.

But the shabby impostor, evidently fearless,

rested his lean arms on the balustrade and breathed long and deep of the soft, sweet air, borne to him on the breeze from the sea's scented islands. Far beneath him lights flashed out by the harborside and, vaguely, he could trace the silvery lines of a yacht riding smoothly to the ground swell.

"Monte Carlo," he said aloud, "you are a beautiful dream city; you are the devil's gilded wonderland. Here men with lustful hands have built a temple to the god called Gold, and here daily they come to worship. I, too, might have knelt in those aisles and bowed my head beneath the gilded dome. Sing, O muse, of Ferdinand Taillandy's sacrifice! And yet was it a sacrifice worthy the singing? They tried to tempt me with their gold. 'Twelve million francs,' they cried, and waited for me to dress myself appropriately to receive it. Twelve million francs! Bah! Twelve million burdens—twelve million fetters to bind me to their world. Ferdinand, you did well to escape them and you are richer than they; for have you not the sky and the sea and the hills and the sun upon them, and twelve million stars to light your way by night?"

He turned his back to the sea to face the mountains, shining snow-crowned against the unquiet sky. On the path to La Turbie a few lights dimmed and glowed small as fireflies. The hush of evening hung about him like a heavy perfume, all-pervading, compelling.

Of a sudden, through the dusk, came a figure in white. It was the myopic aunt, feeling her way along the terrace path. She was wringing her hands and making great lamentation, for she had lost much gold. As she drew near, distress resolved itself into words, and, heedless of who might hear, she complained to the stars.

The shabby poet turned with a quiet smile on his lips. Placing his knapsack on the balustrade, he ran his lean fingers swiftly through his pockets and drew out a thousand-franc note. He presented it with a low bow.

"My poor, good woman," he said, "it is plain that you are in distress. You have lost everything. I give you this the more freely because I, on the contrary, have all of this wonderful world. May it buy for you the happiness of a moment, for by renouncing it I shall gain the happiness of the years."

He thrust the note into her hand. She stopped, groped for her lorgnon, desisted, and mechanically closed her fingers on the piece of paper. Before she could speak he left her.

He turned and, slinging his sack once more across his shoulders, stretched out his arms as though reaching for his freedom.

"I will be true to the gods," he said, and went up toward the hills where they were meeting the night.

CITY OF LIGHTS

NOT far from Paris in miles, but leagues away in spirit, is the village of Evremont-sur-Seine. A line of silvery poplars marches by it in single file, sentinels of the sleeping river; and behind it stretch cultivated fields, green and gold at harvest-time, rolling gently away to the low horizon. December frosts and March winds and April rains have pleasingly modified the color scheme that man, in his arrogance, originally decreed for the houses of Evremont. The tiles of the roofs glow red in the sun, but the walls that once were stark white have now taken to themselves the subtler pastel shades of a rainbow. They seem to have caught and held the hues of the thousands of suns that have set in their sight.

The cobbled streets twist at random through the village, ending their haphazard careers sedately enough at the Place de la Fontaine, the public square and market-place, which takes the name from a watering-trough, and not from the great French fabler. In this square, above the watering-trough, an enterprising humane society has placed the only touch of modernity in Evremont—an enamel sign bearing in white letters on a green ground the warning: "*Soyez bon pour les animaux.*" I wonder if that ad-

monition is necessary: I wonder if the inhabitants of Evremont are not instinctively "good to the animals." My friend, Monsieur Silvestre, assures me that they are.

Monsieur Silvestre is landlord of the *Café du Levant*, which stands on the square and naïvely faces the church. That the church does not resent its proximity, however, is made evident by the fact that Monsieur le curé is a frequent client of the *café*; indeed, he and Monsieur Silvestre are very intimate friends. Differing as they emphatically do in faith and in politics, they are alike in that each has a big heart and a fondness for dark beer.

I was not surprised, then, to find them, one clean, cool day in late April, sitting together under the weather-beaten awning on the sidewalk in front of the *Café du Levant*. I had been talking with Madame Nicolas and her wistful-eyed daughter, Véronique. Madame Nicolas manages a little shop behind the church and Véronique manages Madame Nicolas. At the shop are to be bought all the tender, significant symbols dear to the true believer of the Roman Church—crucifixes of ebony and of ivory; prie-dieu intricately carved by hands both zealous and devout; altar-cloths over the embroidery of which convent sisters have wearied their eyes that God might be the better glorified; rosaries worn smooth by trembling, praying fingers; madonnas gazing with prophetic eyes from Gothic frames; missals bound in vellum as

white as the souls of the children that have held them; candlesticks of gleaming brass, polished anew by Madame Nicolas or by Véronique; small statues of angels, of martyrs, of prophets, and of saints, and wreaths of artificial flowers to honor the graves of the dead. Not all of these objects are beautiful—many of them, indeed, the newer ones, are glaringly ugly. But Madame Nicolas has no favorites; she yearns over them all.

Living and loving and working in such surroundings, it is not strange that Madame Nicolas has become imbued with something of their gentleness and simplicity. She is a quiet-eyed old lady, whose white hair is brushed smoothly back under her white cap, whose motherly bosom is crossed by the ends of a black, knitted shawl, whose feet tread the dim aisles of her shop in noiseless felt slippers, and whose hands are worn and lined from serving her neighbors and her Lord.

During my short stay at Evremont I had been a frequent visitor at Madame Nicolas's shop, sometimes making a trifling purchase, more often acquiring nothing more tangible than a certain serenity of mind which is not to be bought. In my profession as artist Madame Nicolas valued me overhighly, I fear; but I console myself with the reflection that I was able to point out to her several articles in her possession, the real value of which (to an antiquarian, at least) she had sadly underrated. Thus, per-

haps, the benefits were not entirely on one side.

I had come, then, from the shop of Madame Nicolas on an April day, and crossing the square to the Café du Levant had discovered Monsieur Silvestre and the curé sitting behind two tall glasses of dark beer.

"Good afternoon, Monsieur Craddock," said the curé; "the day is fine and the beer is good; will you not join us?"

"The beer is always good at the Café du Levant," I answered, with a bow to Monsieur Silvestre.

"That remark," observed the curé with a smile, "will surely serve to cement the *entente cordiale*."

Monsieur Silvestre indicated his pleasure by placing an iron chair for me at the table and calling loudly for the waiter.

"*C'est le patron qui paie*," said he.

"You will ruin yourself," I objected.

"Bah! It is not every day that we have, gathered here together, such an illustrious trio. Commerce, the Church, and the Fine Arts!"

"You have reason to say it," agreed the curé. "And in such a case, I may add without offence, I hope, to Monsieur Craddock—in such a case it is usually Commerce that pays for the beer." Saying which, he raised his glass to his lips, emptied it, and set it back on the table with a sigh of satisfaction.

"You have come from Madame Nicolas?" queried Monsieur Silvestre.

I admitted that I had.

"An excellent woman," said he.

"A sermon without words," said the curé.

"An unhaloed saint," suggested Monsieur Silvestre.

The priest held up his hand.

"Rarer than that," he declared; "for she is a saint that strives to live rightly rather than to die nobly. That is the essence of Christianity."

"I am no Catholic," said Monsieur Silvestre, "but I know and respect a good woman when I see one. Madame Nicolas has had a hard life. It is well that she has a faith."

The curé smiled quietly and passed a hand across his smooth chin.

"Must one be afflicted to believe?" he murmured. "Pray, then, Monsieur Silvestre, to be afflicted."

"That does not follow—" began the landlord vehemently, when, foreseeing a dispute, I ventured to interrupt.

"You say that Madame Nicolas has had a hard life. Might I inquire how, and why?"

At this Monsieur Silvestre and the curé exchanged questioning glances; and Monsieur Silvestre nodded his head.

"Tell him the story," he said.

The curé, shifting his glass, studied the wet ring it left on the iron table. Then he replaced it carefully and accurately and crossed his hands in his lap.

"Yes," he said slowly, "there is a story."

I settled myself to listen. Monsieur Silvestre drew a packet of tobacco from his pocket and dexterously rolled himself a cigarette. Then he, too, settled himself to listen, but as one who has heard the story before and is prepared to interrupt if the telling of it be not to his satisfaction.

"Madame Nicolas," began the curé, "is not a woman who cries out her troubles from the house-tops. She has never come to me to complain of her fate, but she has come often to me for advice and counsel. The greater part of what I am about to tell you I had from Véronique; and I need not assure you that I am betraying no confidences. All Evremont, alas! knows the story.

"Madame Nicolas's husband, an educated man, a government official in the post-office department here at Evremont, died about ten years ago——"

"Nine," corrected Monsieur Silvestre.

"Died, then, nine years ago, leaving Madame Nicolas with two daughters and a mere shadow of a pension. The girls were nearly of an age—Véronique at that time was eleven and Diane was a scant year younger."

"Eleven months younger," volunteered Monsieur Silvestre.

"Exactly," agreed the curé. "Well, they were delightful little children, both of them. I instructed them for their first communion—

how well I remember! Véronique was very pious—she wrapped herself up in her faith as in a shining, white mantle; and she hid her eyes that they might not look on evil. Such unquestioning belief I had never before seen. I was afraid for her; her feet were not fixed upon the earth.

“Diane was different. Diane was a good child, but she was more—how shall I say it?—more mortal. Her little sins were like yours and mine. She overate, she lost her temper at times, she made malicious speeches, she lied once or twice, she adored, but occasionally disobeyed, her mother—you know, all harmless, natural little offences which she instantly and deeply regretted. I remember that she especially enjoyed setting the dog after the cows down in the pasture by the river. She told me with tears streaming down her cheeks that in spite of herself, in spite of her knowledge that it was wrong, she derived a very unholy pleasure from seeing the poor cows racing madly about the field with the dog barking at their heels. And she had no sooner confessed to this horrible depravity than she commenced to laugh at the recollection of the scene. Oh, yes, she was very human! She was a source of great grief to Véronique, who feared for the loss of her soul. But Madame Nicolas did not worry—or if she did it was not for Diane. Madame Nicolas had started her shop, then, and was earning enough to keep them all clothed and

fed, with a little to set aside at the end of each year as a dowry for the two girls. You see she wanted them to be in a position to marry well when the time should come.

"Véronique did not want to marry. She wanted to enter a convent and take the veil. Both Madame Nicolas and I—God forgive me—discouraged her in the desire. At least we urged her to wait—to make no hasty decision. And she waited. And while she waited there came, of course, a man. A man or the devil always comes when a woman is waiting."

"Sometimes both," suggested Monsieur Silvestre.

"In this case," said the curé, "it was both—the devil in the form of a man."

The curé hesitated and sighed. It was only too evident that this part of the story distressed him, that he shrank from putting the baseness of the world into words. But I don't know whether it was grief or anger that troubled his voice when he continued.

"The man," he said, "was a lieutenant in a Zouave regiment that was quartered near Evremont during some manœuvres. He was very handsome in scarlet and blue with shining buttons and epaulets. And he had large brown eyes and a gallant black mustache. And he ranged the world like a roaring lion seeking whom he might devour. I will say no more. He is dead, and *de mortuis nil*—well, you know the phrase. I forget my Latin."

"De mortuis nil nisi bonum," supplied Monsieur Silvestre, greatly to my surprise; and then he added reproachfully: "You have never forgotten it before."

The curé shrugged.

"Let us get on with the story," he said. "At first Véronique met this lieutenant of Zouaves—his name was Max Tourelle—openly and with the knowledge of Madame Nicolas and myself. But we mistrusted him from the beginning—he was too handsome, too swaggering for our taste. Véronique believed in him implicitly, and when he spoke of love to her she hugged his words to her heart. And she gave over her soul from God's keeping into his. Madame Nicolas pleaded with her; I pleaded with her; Diane cried herself to sleep every night. But Véronique did not cry. She was eighteen and very much in love, and we seemed to her like mourners at a feast. She could not understand our attitude.

"One night—the night the camp broke up and the regiment was ordered back to the city—she stole out of the house, joined him, and ran away with him to Paris to be married. . . . Of course he did not marry her."

"He left her and she came back to Evremont?" I asked.

The curé shook his head.

"No," he said, "he did not leave her, and she did not come back to Evremont for a long time."

"Poor Madame Nicolas," I murmured.

"Poor Véronique," said Monsieur Silvestre.

"Poor Diane," said the curé, and seemed to enjoy my mystification.

There was a short silence.

"Well," urged Monsieur Silvestre impatiently, "continue."

"I continue," said the curé. "The next morning Madame Nicolas came to me at sunrise. I am ashamed to say I was still in bed; but I threw on my soutane in haste and received her. She was very white, I remember, and she was trembling; but she did not break down.

"'I have lost my daughter,' she said—'I have lost Véronique.' And then she repeated it again: 'I have lost my daughter—I have lost Véronique.'

"That was all she said; but I knew, of course, what had happened. I had feared it.

"I quoted no scripture to console her, although a hundred phrases came to my lips. I took her by the hand and led her out to my little garden where we could see the sun coming up behind the hills and the morning breeze stirring the poplars by the river. And I said: 'Madame Nicolas, do you see the sun?' and she answered: 'Yes.' And I said: 'Madame Nicolas, do you see the river and the trees and the grass with the wind upon them?' And she answered: 'Yes.' And I said: 'Do you see the clouds, rose and mauve and gray, and the stars

paling up there in the sky?' And she again answered: 'Yes.'

"Then I said: 'Madame Nicolas, God is watching over the sun, and it is His will that it shall rise; and God is watching over the river, and it is His will that it shall flow to the sea; and God is watching over the trees and the grass, and it is His will that the wind shall be upon them; and God is watching over the clouds and the stars and as they are, so He wills that they shall be. Do you not, then, believe that God is watching over your daughter and that His will shall be done?'"

The curé paused and Monsieur Silvestre, much affected but eager to prove his iconoclasm, said: "That is all very well, but, after all, the sun and the river and the trees and the clouds and the stars are coming to no harm. It is only we poor mortals that have to look out for ourselves. Where should we land if we did not?—I ask you."

The curé regarded him scornfully.

"I was speaking at the time to a Catholic," he said, "not to a heretic. Heretics must look out for themselves; for I am not sure just how much interest *le Bon Dieu* takes in them."

Perceiving that Monsieur Silvestre had a spirited retort at his lips, I interposed quickly, begging the curé to proceed.

"Well, Madame Nicolas went home comforted, and in ten days she received a little note from Véronique. I remember the words of it

as well as I remember the *Pater Noster*. She said: 'I am in Paris with Max and am very happy. Yesterday we went up the Eiffel Tower. We are to be married very soon. I adore Paris and I worship Max. Do not worry about me, for I am completely happy. That is to say, I shall be completely happy if you forgive me.'

"Madame Nicolas tried to obtain comfort from the assurance that they were to be married soon. As for me, I fear I was not so trusting; for I saw in Véronique's repeated assertion that she was happy merely a defiant endeavor to persuade herself that she was not horribly unhappy. There are times when I am no optimist. That is perhaps because it has been my blessed privilege for many years to minister unto misery.

"Poor Véronique had not dared to give her address in the letter, and it was a long time before we were able to locate her. Paris is a large city, and the Véroniques in it do not make themselves conspicuous. Finally, at the request of Madame Nicolas, who was only too willing to forgive, I myself went in search of the girl. It was not my first visit to Paris, messieurs. No, indeed, I have travelled a great deal: I have been three times to Paris and twice to Lyons and it was but six years ago that I should have journeyed to Rome had not my neuralgia come upon me the day before I was to leave.

"Diane begged to accompany me. She was sure that if she might see her sister and talk

with her she could persuade her to return. Véronique had always loved Diane and had never been able to say no to her in anything she desired. But I thought it better for her not to come. I think that I was wrong. If I was I can only plead that it was an error in judgment, not in intention.

"I went alone, then, and after three days I found Véronique. She was living in a little room in the house on the rue des Saints-Pères; and Max had not married her. During the day she worked in a *confiserie*, selling cakes and sweetmeats and earning two francs a day. That seems good pay to us here in Evremont, but I am told that it is nothing in Paris. She explained that Max was not rich and that she did not wish to be a burden to him. I was able to perceive immediately (although she tried bravely to conceal her misgivings) that she doubted if he would ever marry her. The surprise of seeing me broke down her guard and she wept on my shoulder. She had come at last to realize the importance of what she had done; but, quite naturally, she still clung to Max as her salvation. Her only hope lay in him. And it was against this hope that springs eternal that I was forced to fight. I lost the fight."

"That was but natural," observed Monsieur Silvestre. "Max had it in his power to make her an honest woman by marrying her: he could undo what he had done, but you could not. You

could but offer her consolation and spiritual absolution."

"Precisely," agreed the curé. "I came to her either too soon or too late. Had I come sooner I might have been in time to save her; had I come later she would have had opportunity to become convinced that Max was a scoundrel, and I could have won her away from him. As it was I came back to Evremont, my hands empty, but my heart full to overflowing.

"A year passed, and two years. Madame Nicolas, uncomplaining and dignified in her sorrow, tended the little shop with Diane; and every night they prayed to the Mother of God to be kind to Véronique and to remember that she was very young. And Madame Nicolas suddenly seemed to grow very old.

"On a certain night Madame Nicolas had a dream. At the time we both thought it a divine revelation, but subsequent events caused us to doubt that it emanated from heaven. So we have since called it simply a dream."

"Ha!" exclaimed Monsieur Silvestre, "you pretend to claim——"

"I claim nothing," interrupted the curé severely. "I state our belief—no more. I have a right to a belief; you, who are an agnostic, have not; you cannot even believe that you are an agnostic, for an agnostic is one who believes nothing."

Monsieur Silvestre found no answer and the curé continued.

"Madame Nicolas dreamed that night that she saw Véronique and Diane together, clasped in each other's arms. Véronique was weeping bitterly and Diane was soothing her and comforting her and stroking her bright hair with gentle, sisterly hands. And Véronique was crying because she had lost the little silver cross that had hung on a slender chain at her breast since the day of her first communion. Then, in a dream, Madame Nicolas saw Diane unclasp her own little silver cross and give it Véronique. And when she had done so she went very white and buried her face in her hands and wept. But Véronique, seeing her sister's distress, refused at first to take the cross; and it was not until Diane, between her sobs, had urged her and pleaded with her for a long time that she consented to do so. Then she clasped the chain at her neck and peace came into her eyes and she was comforted.

"Madame Nicolas the next morning told Diane of her dream and they agreed that it had come from *le Bon Dieu*, that it clearly meant that Diane should go to Paris and see her sister and cheer her and prevail on her to come back to Evremont and be forgiven. Diane, conscious of her power with Véronique, was enthusiastic and eager to start at once. She had no fear of the city, nor would she hear of Madame Nicolas or myself accompanying her. She pointed out that in the dream she had been alone with Véronique, that this was obviously

the desire of *le Bon Dieu*, and that to disregard His manifest wish would be to show ourselves ungrateful and might well displease Him. In the end she convinced us that she was right.

"The next day we put her on the train for Paris. I gave her minute directions how she should find Véronique, but she scarcely heeded them. *Le Bon Dieu*, she said, would show her the way and guard her steps. She was so happy, so confident of her success, that we could not but share some of her elation."

The curé paused to moisten his lips and drain his glass. Monsieur Silvestre, for once, made no comment.

"What happened in Paris," the curé resumed, "I had from Véronique. Diane, arriving at the Gare Saint-Lazare at ten o'clock——"

"At ten-seven," corrected Monsieur Silvestre.

"Diane, arriving at ten-seven, went straight to the *confiserie* and found her sister with no delay whatever. I can imagine the meeting. It is certain that there were many kisses and a few tears. It is good for the young to cry a little.

"Véronique immediately requested and obtained a half-holiday. The *patronne* was big-hearted and had a sister of her own, in Dijon, whom she had not seen for seven years. I think the *patronne* shed a few tears, too, from sympathy.

"Véronique and Diane walked out of the shop, with their arms about each other's waists,

just as they used to walk to the pasture down here by the river, when they were little girls. And it seemed to them, for a while, at least, as if nothing had changed, nothing had come between them since those far-away days. But once or twice Véronique would stop short in the middle of a laugh and once or twice her fingers would seek Diane's and press them so hard that it hurt.

"Véronique led the way to her room in the rue des Saint-Pères, for she wanted to change from her working-clothes into her best dress. She wanted, you see, to make it a *jour de fête*.

"'You will stop the night here with me, Diane, will you not?' she asked.

"Diane did not hesitate an instant.

"'It will be better, Véronique, if we both go back to Evremont this evening. I have come to bring you home.'

"But Véronique shrank away.

"'No,' she said slowly, 'I cannot go home.'

"Diane threw herself to her knees in front of her sister.

"'We are breaking our hearts waiting for you,' she said. 'It is for our sake that we ask you to come. Have pity.'

"But Véronique shook her head.

"'I cannot leave Max.'

"'Our mother is getting old,' urged Diane. 'She needs you. The two years that you have been gone have seemed very long and bitter to her.'

“‘So have they seemed to me,’ said Véronique, but so low that Diane scarce heard her. ‘Come,’ she continued, ‘let us not spoil our one day together. We will discuss it to-morrow. Meanwhile I shall show you many wonderful things, for Paris is a beautiful city—especially in April when the sun is shining.’”

“Diane then saw that for the present she could gain nothing by persevering. So she determined to bide her time patiently. She did not despair for an instant.

“While she washed her hands and face her sister got into a beautiful gown. It was blue, I think, and had some marvellous lace at the neck and wrists. Max had bought it for her in a shop on the rue de Rivoli. Diane had never seen its equal before, and I am afraid that she looked on it with covetous eyes. Diane, as I told you, was very human.

“When they were ready Véronique took her sister’s hand and they went out into the streets. They walked for miles. They saw the Louvre and the Vendôme column and Notre Dame. When they stopped in front of Notre Dame, Diane gave a little gasp and the tears started to her eyes. It was so beautiful that it made her cry. And, without thinking, she begged that they go in to pray.

“Véronique drew sharply away that Diane might not see her face.

“‘Come,’ she said; ‘we will not go in.’”

"But her voice trembled so much that Diane understood.

"They turned and walked up the *quai* beside the swollen river.

" 'Look,' said Diane, 'it is the same dear old Seine that flows by the pasture at home where the cows are. Do you remember how one could see the reflections of the poplars marching along in it upside down? Do you remember how blue it was at noon, and how silver it was at evening?'

" 'Yes,' said Véronique. 'In Paris it is neither blue nor silver very often.'

"They purchased a lunch at a bakery and ate it under the trees in the Tuileries, like the *midinettes*. Then they crossed the Place de la Concorde and Véronique pointed out the monument of Alsace-Lorraine and the wreaths with which a bereaved nation had dressed it.

" 'There are flowers in front of your picture at home,' said Diane. But Véronique answered nothing.

"They walked slowly up the Champs-Élysées, watching the automobiles and carriages go by, filled with gay people in beautiful clothes. Diane's eyes sparkled with excitement. It was all very strange to her and beautiful and dazzling; and, as you know, the Champs-Élysées has a great *chic* in the afternoon. Before they had reached the Rond-Point a troop of the Republican Guard rode by—great giants of men, with plumes waving and cuirasses gleaming and

horses fretting and tossing their heads. It was a sight to stir one's blood. Diane, in her excitement, clung close to her sister; and Véronique, who had seen it all before, laughed at her and teased her for being *une petite provinciale*.

"Then they went to a *guignol*—oh, they saw all the wonderful sights of Paris! And they both laughed a great deal and chattered merrily and enjoyed themselves just as they used to do when the circus came to Evremont.

"Presently Véronique stopped short in the middle of a laugh, caught her breath sharply, and said: 'Come, we must return to the rue des Saints-Pères. Max will be waiting. He has promised to take me to dinner, and if I am late he becomes impatient.'

"It was the first time that Véronique had alluded to Max, and Diane felt suddenly embarrassed and ill at ease. She did not know quite what to say. Véronique must have misunderstood her sister's confusion, for she said: 'You will have dinner with us, too, of course.'

"But Diane hung back.

" 'There is a train for Evremont,' she said. 'I can catch it if I hurry. Oh, Véronique, *we* can catch it if we hurry!'

"Véronique shook her head.

" 'Not yet,' she said gently. 'I cannot go yet, Diane. Perhaps to-morrow. We shall see. Wait until to-morrow.'

"So they returned to the rue des Saints-Pères.

Max was waiting, and he seemed not at all displeased to have an addition to their dinner-party. He was very gay and dashing and cracked a great many funny jokes that set Diane laughing in spite of herself. And he appeared to have plenty of money to spend.

"'We will dine this evening *en prince!*' he cried. 'Nothing is too good for our little country sister. Behold! I have twenty-two francs! We will spend it all—every *centime.*'

"I have forgotten the name of the restaurant where he took them to dine; but no matter, I should never have occasion to go there, myself—it is far too expensive. I know, however, that it was near the Gare du Montparnasse. A dinner cost three francs-fifty, *vin compris*. Think of the extravagance, messieurs! And Max gave a franc to the waiter as a *pourboire*. Truly, Parisians care nothing for their money!

"There was an orchestra and a great musician that played divinely on the violin. Max asked Diane if she did not want him to play some favorite tune of hers, and she clapped her hands, delighted, and begged for *Venite Adoremus*. Max laughed very loudly, but the musician had heard her and he played it. He must have played it very wonderfully, for Véronique tells me that it made her cry, although she did not want to because it always made Max angry when she cried.

"Every one in the restaurant looked around at Diane, and smiled and nudged each other and

laughed because she had chosen a tune that is not played in restaurants. But the musician saw them laughing and became furious and cried: '*Canaille!* If you have no respect for good music I shall play no more.' And he packed up his violin and went out.

"There followed, of course, much excitement. The proprietor was vexed and the clients were vexed and Max was in a rage and hurried Véronique and Diane out of the café.

"He took them then to a music-hall, where they sat in the very front row of the gallery. Diane loved the performance, although she could not understand much that was said because it was mostly in the Parisian *argot*. But there was a tableau of Napoleon bidding farewell to the Old Guard that was extremely beautiful and, doubtless, of great historical interest. But the Old Guard were women in very close-fitting uniforms—which seemed strange.

"In any case the representation put Max in a good humor again, and he suggested that they go to the Panthéon for supper. At first Diane thought that he meant the Panthéon with the big dome—she had pictures of it on postal cards—and she was surprised to think that people went there for supper. But Max explained that he meant a different place altogether; he meant the *Taverne du Panthéon*, which is a café with music and dancing.

"Diane enjoyed herself hugely. Max met some friends from his regiment and brought

them up and introduced them to her; and they asked her to dance. She danced the polka very gracefully, but they taught her some new steps that we do not dance here at Evremont. Before they knew it, it was two o'clock in the morning. Think of it, my friends!

"As they walked home by the side of the Luxembourg Gardens, Diane was quiet and sad. She felt, you see, that she had been too easily led to forget the object of her mission. She was very glad when Max said good-night to them and left them at the door of the house in the rue des Saints-Pères; and she determined that she would not sleep that night until she should have had a long talk with Véronique and used all her persuasions.

"Véronique, holding a candle, lighted the way up the five flights of twisting stairs, and with every step Diane's heart grew heavier, for she knew that if she did not succeed in making Véronique listen to her that night, she should never succeed at all.

"When they reached the room Véronique immediately started to undress; and it was then that Diane noticed that her sister no longer wore the little silver cross about her neck. This discovery startled her and awed her, for she recalled Madame Nicolas's dream and she was sure that she saw in it the hand of God.

" 'What are you looking at, Diane?' asked Véronique.

" 'You have lost your silver cross,' faltered

Diane—‘or is it that you no longer care to wear it?’

“Véronique instinctively put her hand to her breast, searching with her fingers. Then she desisted and nodded her head sadly.

“‘I have lost it,’ said she. ‘The chain broke and I lost it—two years ago—the night I left Evremont. But even now I cannot realize that it is gone. Always I am feeling for it; and always it is not there; and always I am surprised until I remember—until I remember. Oh, Diane, I wish that I might never remember; I wish I were of those that can forget!’

“With that she threw herself on the bed and commenced to sob bitterly. Diane went to her and took her in her arms and soothed her and comforted her and stroked her bright hair with gentle, sisterly hands. And, even as Madame Nicolas had dreamed, she unclasped her own little silver cross from about her neck and gave it to Véronique. And when she had done so she went very white and buried her face in her hands and wept. But she did not know why she wept, for she was really glad that Véronique should have the cross.

“Then, again, as in the dream, Véronique refused at first to take the gift. Diane urged her and pleaded with her to do so, and at last Véronique clasped the chain at her neck and peace came into her eyes and she was comforted.

“That night, as they lay side by side in the

narrow bed, Véronique said in a whisper: 'Diane, are you asleep?'

" 'No,' answered Diane, 'I was praying.'

" 'Were you praying for me?' asked Véronique.

" 'For you — and for myself,' " answered Diane.

" 'Tell me more about home, Diane,' whispered Véronique. 'Tell me about the shop. Is the image of Sainte Véronique still unsold? Tell me about mother. Is she—is she very bitter against me? And tell me about the curé and Monsieur Silvestre and the church and the Café du Levant and the Place de la Fontaine. Do the sparrows still come to drink at the watering-trough?'

"So Diane told her everything she wished to know. She told her of the little humdrum affairs of the village; she told her of the shop—that the image of Sainte Véronique still stood in the corner and that Madame Nicolas, remembering how fond Véronique had been of it, had refused to sell it; she told her of myself and of Monsieur Silvestre here; and then she told her of the peace and the calm that lie over the village like a benediction. And when she had finished Véronique sighed and kissed her and said: 'To-morrow, Diane, I will go back with you to Evremont!' Then Véronique lay back and slept like a child. But Diane slept very little.

"When Véronique awoke the next morning

the first thing she did was to feel for the little cross at her breast. Her fingers found it and she smiled. Then, while she bathed and dressed, she sang—very low that she might not disturb Diane. But her heart was singing loudly. She packed the few trifles that she had brought with her when she left Evremont two years ago—nothing more—and when all was ready she called Diane.

“Diane awoke and the first thing she did was to feel for the little cross at her breast. Her fingers found it not and she sighed. But Véronique was so happy that the sigh passed unobserved.

“‘Come,’ said Véronique, ‘There is a train, is there not, at half past eight?’

“Diane delayed her dressing long enough to throw her arms about her sister’s neck.

“‘It is, then, really true,’ said she; and she, too, seemed very happy. . . .

“Well, they took the early train. I had finished my breakfast and was in the Place, taking a breath of the fragrant morning air when I saw them coming up the street from the station. I ran to them and embraced them both. *Mon Dieu*, how I rejoiced at the miracle, and I remembered, but did not repeat, the parable of the sheep that strayed from the fold. Instead I cried aloud: ‘God is good!’ I could have gone on my knees in the dust of the street and given thanks——”

“It would have attracted attention,” inter-

rupted Monsieur Silvestre; but I noticed that more than once he had furtively rubbed his sleeve across his eyes, and so I judged that his irony was but a mask.

"Yes," agreed the curé, "it would have attracted attention to Véronique. That is why I did not. But might I, in this connection, recall to your mind, Monsieur Silvestre, what you yourself did on that day? You took every *centime* that was paid in at the Café du Levant, and when you thought no one was looking you dropped it all into my poor-box."

"Bah!" said Monsieur Silvestre. "That indicates nothing. One does not have to be religious to be sorry for the poor."

The curé smiled and shook his head.

"Monsieur Silvestre," he said, "in spite of yourself you are one of the best Christians in the diocese."

"Then God help the church!" said Monsieur Silvestre, determined to have the last word.

"He will," said the curé with conviction.

"Now, Monsieur Craddock," he continued, turning to me, "I now come to the end of the story. That was, indeed, a day of rejoicing—the day that brought Véronique back to us. She seemed to fit at once into the niche that we had held for her in our hearts during her absence. She was quiet—she did not cringe, she held up her head; but one could see how grateful she was for any kindness."

"And Madame Nicolas?" said I—"Madame Nicolas, I presume, was very happy."

The curé shifted in his chair and gazed steadfastly across the square, far above the tower of his church into the clear April sky.

"Madame Nicolas," he said slowly, "was very happy for twenty-four hours."

"But—" I began, and then stopped, waiting in silence for him to proceed.

"On the very night of her return, while Véronique slept smiling beside her, Diane arose, tossed a few garments into a little cloth valise, and just as Véronique had done before her, stole from the house out into the great vast night. The city, I suppose, had got into her blood. They traced her as far as Paris, and then—they lost her. They have never heard from her since. The world has her now, and the world, alas! is not gentle."

Monsieur Silvestre cleared his throat loudly and turned his back.

"Poor Madame Nicolas," he said, and there was a break in his voice.

"Poor Diane," said the curé.

But a different thought came to me. I thought of Véronique and the burden that she bore on her slender shoulders, and, remembering the tragedy that lay dark in her eyes, I said: "Poor Véronique."

Then, for a space, we fell silent, each busy with his own thoughts. The shadow of the church tower stretched its blue length across

the square, edging ever nearer to us as the sun descended the sky. The village was dreamily still, save for the voices of boatmen calling to one another on the river.

At last the curé stirred in his chair. I think that he had been praying—for one in peril on uncharted seas. He raised his head slowly, and his eyes, sweeping the west, rested on the gold cross above his little church. Behind the cross lay Paris and the setting sun.

THE BOTTOM OF THE CUP

I

DIANE NICOLAS, having run away from home and thus, on an impulse, upset all her own and other people's plans for her future, found that Paris was not quite the radiant city of lights and romance which one brief former visit had led her to expect. The lights were there, to be sure, and doubtless the romance, but two are necessary to achieve romance even of the most tawdry sort—and Diane was alone. It is not gay to be alone in Paris, especially when one is young and a girl, and has been bred to be shy in the presence of strangers.

Why, then, she asked herself, had she come? Why had she abandoned Evremont-sur-Seine and her mother, and the little shop where her mother sold the crucifixes and the images of saints, and above all, why had she abandoned her sister Véronique, whom she herself had brought back, tear-stained and wretched, from the City of Lights?

Diane, I repeat, posed these questions to herself, but she could not answer them, nor can I. Certainly that one amusing, rather riotous night in Paris had had a great deal to do with her returning to live it again; and certainly she had been well aware that if she were to return ever

to Paris, it could not be with the consent of Madame Nicolas. Psychologists and students of heredity would no doubt claim that her action was the result of the presence in her character of some strain of wilfulness and passion inherited from a remote rake of an ancestor—an excellent solution, of course, but pure nonsense. Had she taken the veil instead, these same authorities would just as convincingly have credited it to the presence of a strain of asceticism and mysticism inherited from an early saint or martyr.

In any case she had run away from everything that she loved and revered to come to Paris, of which she knew next to nothing. She did not know why she had done it, and she knew many reasons why she should not have done it, and yet I do not believe that at first she regretted at all having done it. That makes the action almost comprehensible. You see what I mean? The impulse was so powerful and so dominating that it left no room within her for regrets. She was able to rise above her disappointments. Also Paris, experienced even at its worst, was a change from Evremont—and Diane belonged to the restless sex.

On the occasion of her previous visit to Paris, she and Véronique had dined with some young Frenchmen at the Taverne du Panthéon. There had been a man—a young zouave and a friend of Véronique's friend—who had danced with her three times and who had assured her ar-

dently that for him she was a glimpse of Paradise. She remembered with some confusion and a certain unavowed but very real pleasure, how closely during the dances he had held his Paradise. . . . So for three days in succession, at the end of her search for employment, she went to the Taverne du Panthéon. Besides, she argued, she had no reason to go elsewhere.

On the third day she encountered him. It was in the late afternoon, and she was alone at a table drinking a *sirop*. He came in laughing with two friends, stared at her a moment, and, when she blushed and smiled, went over to her and shook her cordially by both hands.

"But it is the little sister of Véronique!" he cried. "The little sister from the country; what does she do here alone, the little sister from the country?"

Diane was immensely and tremulously pleased.

"She drinks a *sirop*," she explained, with a gesture.

"Excellent," he laughed, "we shall all drink together, if you permit. I will present to you my two friends—an artist called Bruno and a would-be architect called Ro-been-son. He is an American—the passionate-looking one with the beard. And you—you are Mademoiselle Diane, are you not?"

"Yes," she agreed, "you have a good memory, monsieur."

"One does not forget Paradise," he murmured, looking her in the eyes. "As for me—my name is——"

"Your name," she interrupted, "is Monsieur Raoul."

"I thank you a thousand times for deigning to remember," he said magnificently, with a slight smile and his eyes ever on hers. Then he motioned to Bruno and Robinson, and they made places for themselves around the table.

Bruno was a large man with a large mustache and a fatherly manner toward little women. Robinson was a gaunt, long American, who spoke French slang freely with a good accent and bad grammar, and who during the six months that he had studied his profession at the Beaux Arts had grown a beard and learned to neglect his nails and use a toothpick. Also he had learned to *tutoyer* every one—especially little women.

Over the glasses the conversation became rapid if not sparkling. They discovered that Diane had come alone to Paris; that she was seeking an opportunity to earn money in some dressmaking shop; that she embroidered, she had been told, with considerable skill, but that thus far she had found no employment.

"Why not pose for Bruno?" suggested Robinson. "He is doing a sort of imitation Chabas at present. Green, still pool; large tree; young girl shivering underneath."

But Robinson received no encouragement;

for Raoul scowled at him disapprovingly, and Bruno resented hotly the imputation that he was copying Chabas.

Diane, not being an authority on art, did not venture to intrude in the discussion that ensued. Indeed she scarcely understood a word of what they said—no great loss to her, for she would without doubt hear it all repeated as often as she should be in their company.

Raoul being a good deal of a materialist, took advantage of the argument to whisper an invitation for dinner to Diane. Just the two of them, of course. She neither refused nor accepted; and she was amused and a little perplexed when both Robinson and Bruno followed suit at short intervals, the former holding out a truly regal entertainment as his bait, and the latter suggesting a very modest dinner over which they should discuss her future and devise means for securing her employment. This he offered her in his most paternal manner, and, as it happened, the paternal manner won the day. Of Robinson and of Raoul she was afraid. As for Bruno—why, Bruno was almost as old and therefore almost as harmless as Monsieur Silvestre who kept the inn at Evremont.

And so she dined with Bruno, not only that night but several nights thereafter.

And he pretended to find work for her in the quarter, but never somehow succeeded. When her small capital was exhausted and she was

starving, he fed her. And gradually her gratitude turned to affection and, as he had patiently planned, to what she thought was love. When that moment arrived Bruno pointed out to her how they might economize if she gave up her room and came to live with him. She could not deny the reasonableness of his argument, so she packed up her few little belongings and moved into his studio, where for a while she was very happy.

II

BRUNO was always kind to her, and there is no reason to doubt that he loved her as well as he knew how. She, knowing nothing of men, was filled with a great respect for him and his work and his friends and, above all, his conversation. He talked a great deal of things she did not understand, but with such a profound air of conviction that she came to share his belief in the brilliancy of his intellect. This, of course, was gratifying to him, and tended to increase his affection for her. All males like to inspire a certain amount of awe in their womenfolk, and, when they succeed in this, they credit the woman with a comprehending nature and she rises correspondingly in their esteem.

So when Bruno discoursed in his studio to three or four of his disciples, Diane sat quietly in a corner, all eyes and ears—and, moreover, very pretty eyes and ears. Bruno would smile

kindly upon her if she ventured to intrude a remark, wave his pipe and answer her in words noticeably of one syllable. Then he would murmur half aloud, "*Elle est gentille*," or "*Est-ce qu'elle est mignonne!*" and resume his harangue. She was referred to constantly both by him and by his friends as "*la petite*," and his friends were very polite to her and in no way surprised at her presence in the studio. Later she suspected from this that she had had predecessors, but later she asked herself who had not?

For the time being her happiness depended entirely on Bruno's affection—on its manifestation and on its prospect of enduring. Quite naturally, no doubt, once she had committed herself, the thought of another man never entered her mind. And, so firm was her faith in Bruno that the possibility of his leaving her seemed out of the question. They were not married—that, of course, was very regrettable—but they loved each other and would grow old together and never separate. That, to her, was a certainty. She often made plans for their old age, so sure was she that they would reach it together—plans that comprised children and a possible marriage to legitimize them. Included among these plans was a triumphant return with her husband to Evremont and to her mother and her sister. There would be Monsieur le curé and Monsieur Silvestre, the inn-keeper, rushing over to Madame Nicolas's shop

to greet her, and Monsieur le curé would baptize the children in the little church on the square. Probably there would be three children. Two would be old enough to walk, and the baby she would carry in her arms. It would be summer, so she would be dressed in white with a crimson belt at her waist and a broad straw hat with roses in it. Bruno, who, of course, would receive a tremendous welcome, would lay down the artistic law of an evening to the wide-eyed curé and Monsieur Silvestre, and he would paint charming landscapes of the clean little red and white village and of the murmuring Seine with the poplars swaying in line beside it. These, after they had been exhibited at the Salon, he would doubtless sell for fabulous sums to rich Americans. . . . She was young, you see, and a dreamer of dreams, which made her less able to support the blow that reality was to deal to her. It seems strange (and yet such strange things happen continually) that she who had seen her sister Véronique disillusioned should have had no fears for herself.

Meanwhile her ménage with Bruno had not gained her the friendship either of Raoul or of Robinson, both of whom considered themselves to have been shabbily treated. Raoul thought she should have been his by right of discovery, and Robinson was unpleasantly surprised that she should have scorned him in spite of his offers of expensive entertainment.

Now it was unfortunate that at the time that Bruno offered Diane a share in his possessions and in his life he had been assiduously courting (always in his paternal manner) another. It was equally unfortunate that Bruno, who detested a row, had not had the courage to inform this other that her seat on the throne beside him had been very adequately filled.

The girl whom Diane had supplanted was called Madeleine Brissonet, and was known by those who knew her as Madelon. Living with her father at St. Cloud, she was not either by birth or by residence of the quarter; but she came daily to draw in an atelier off the Boulevard du Montparnasse. There Bruno had met her and had condescended to criticise her work, which was deplorable. He had assured her, however, that she showed promise, and had given her several dinners at the Closerie des Lilas, during which he had wooed her with his eloquence and a rather heavy Burgundy. Madelon, a little flaxen-haired hypocrite, had played him like a fish until she had reduced him to a condition where she had but to reach for the landing net. Very demure and saint-like she was, and as hard as nails. Accordingly, men admired her, and the women students at the atelier disliked her intensely and consoled themselves by telling one another that she was knock-kneed (which was not true) and that, of course, she dyed her hair. The latter accusation she admitted, offering them the recipe.

It is obvious, then, that Raoul, Robinson, and Madelon were a formidable trio, each with a spoke ready to thrust into the wheel of Diane's happiness. That the three of them met one afternoon at Lavenue's was not, however, the result of a conspiracy—it was an event that sooner or later was bound to occur. Poor Bruno would have trembled had he seen their three heads together over the foaming bocks.

"Have you ever seen her, Madelon?" Robinson began maliciously.

"Whom?" asked Madelon.

"The little friend of Bruno," said Robinson. "She is quite lovely—young, slim, graceful, adorable and, I believe, adoring. Old Bruno is most fortunate. He appears to know it and is as happy as a cat before the fire. Have you met him recently and noted his rejuvenation?"

"You are always disagreeable," said Madelon—"even when you do not try to be. So why, I wonder, do you try?"

Robinson smiled like a man of the world and blew out a cloud of cigarette smoke.

"I am trying to arouse you," he said languidly. "I am bored and I should like to see a little action in the quarter. Life is dull, isn't it, Raoul?"

"Life is very dull," agreed the zouave. "I could have loved that girl. Indeed, I am not sure that I did not and do not. What eyes—like those of a saint giving in to temptation! I wish I had married her."

"Imbecile," observed Madelon briefly, and sipped her beer.

Raoul smiled at her a shade pityingly.

"You do not understand," he said. "You have not seen her."

"But yes, I have seen her," she retorted impatiently. "And what then? I saw a thin little provincial in an abominable gown and hat of the early Fallières period. Do you think I allow myself to be perturbed by such a competitor. Bruno will tire of her in a week, and if he does not. . . . Order me another bock, Robinson, you who are rich."

"It is just as well that you are not jealous," said Robinson, giving the order—"it is just as well that you are not jealous, because I have never before seen a ménage that promised to be so enduring. I understand that Bruno intends to marry her shortly. That, at least, would be a marriage made in heaven."

Robinson leant back in his chair to witness the effect of this, his supreme blow. Machiavelli would, I think, have been pleased with Robinson.

That Madelon was perturbed was instantly apparent to one who knew her. Her childish little mouth lost something of its childishness, the eyelids narrowed over her large blue eyes, and suddenly she ceased to be pretty. Framed by her coy yellow curls, her face seemed for an instant almost old. . . . She pretended to be busy with a cigarette.

"Who told you about the marriage?" she asked at length—"or are you lying?"

His point gained, Robinson could afford to feign indifference.

"Naturally," he said lazily, "I am lying. I always lie. But if you don't believe me, my dear Madelon, there is nothing to prevent your finding out for yourself."

Raoul, who was hampered by certain decent sentiments, interposed.

"Come," he said, "leave her alone. It is not Diane's fault that she made us miserable, and at least she has made old Bruno happy."

Meant well, it was nevertheless a most unfortunate speech and put Madelon into a rage that she made no attempt to conceal.

"Happy!" she said, "that little fool from the country that dresses herself like a chambermaid on Sunday—that ignorant little toy doll make Bruno happy! Bah! *Je m'en fiche d'elle comme de ma chemise!*"

She went on to say even more—phrases, I fear, that she had not learned from the good sisters in the convent. Robinson listened in silent approval.

"You do not understand human nature, Madelon," he interposed at length. "This little Diane does not dress expensively nor does she act expensively. She is simple and natural in clothes and actions. That is why Bruno will marry her. The contrast, . . ."

"The contrast with me, I suppose," sneered Madelon.

"Precisely. What are you going to do about it?"

Madelon clutched tardily at her lost dignity.

"I will beckon with my finger," she said grandly, "and Bruno will come."

"Very well," said Robinson. "Beckon and good luck."

III

MADELON lost no time in beckoning with her finger. Arming herself with a "Manual for the Writing of Letters of Passion," which she procured from a book-stall on the *quai*, she retired to a remote table in a café and set to work. The result was the following masterpiece, of which the phrases were culled from the book, but of which the many and elaborately formed capital letters were her own.

"MY LOVE:

"It is a long time that one has not seen you. Is it that you have tired of me so soon—of me whom you swore to Love for always? I cannot believe it, and yet I am frightened at your Coolness. During these three weeks I have waited with Patience for a word from you, and my Heart is broken and torn with a Supreme Anguish. What have I done to you that you scorn the Bleeding Heart I have placed in your

hands? Am I then nothing to you but a Toy which you have broken and thrown aside? One time you called me Beautiful and all that was adorable. Is that time so long ago that you have forgotten, or is it that I have ceased to be Beautiful and adorable? Come to me once more that I may prove to you how Beautiful and adorable I yet can be. Your Madelon who forgets not."

And then she added, of course, a postscript—and this without the aid of her manual.

"Meet me Thursday at five at the Musée du Luxembourg. If not, I shall kill you, dirty pig!"

She reread the letter with deep satisfaction. It seemed to combine passion and dignity, and the postscript robbed it of a certain humility which to her mind had rather marred the letter from the manual.

"Now," she said, when she had stamped and mailed it—"now, we shall see."

But as a matter of fact she saw nothing resultant for several days; for during those days Diane had been guilty of a dishonorable act: she had opened the letter and read it before it reached the hands of Bruno. And this, again, had been the result of Robinson's Machiavelian touch.

The day after Robinson had sown the seed of jealousy in Madelon's fertile brain, he had decided that Diane ought to be aroused to her

danger, otherwise the combat would be too one-sided and Madelon might well steal Bruno away without a struggle. For complete vengeance a struggle surely was necessary—a three-cornered struggle in which each of the combatants should be rendered thoroughly miserable. Such men as Robinson exist, but as a rule they are not allowed to reach their prime.

Accordingly, in order that Diane might have her fair portion of misery, Robinson presented himself at the studio at an hour when he knew Bruno was away. Diane received him, clad in a long apron. She was preparing to cook the dinner and had just finished polishing the floor.

"The perfect housewife," said Robinson, eying her with open admiration. "Spotlessly neat, cool in spite of the heat, and no trace of that unbecoming flush so often bred of the kitchen stove. In you Bruno has a jewel. I can but hope that he knows it."

"Come in," answered Diane, "and sit down. Or, no—help me rather with the coals, if you will be so kind."

"I can stay only an instant," declared Robinson quickly, for he had no desire to help with the coals. "Postpone the dinner preparation for five minutes, my dear, as I have something of great importance to tell you."

"Oh!" she exclaimed, "let me guess! It is that you have been admitted to the Beaux-Arts?"

He shook his head, smiling, watching her.

"No; not so cataclysmic as that."

She pondered and finally said tentatively: "You have perhaps bought that pipe you so admire in the shop of the rue de la Paix?"

Still he shook his head.

"More epoch-making than that."

"I know, then," she cried— "it is that you are to be married?"

He ceased smiling and laid his hand on her arm.

"No," he said, "but it is that you are in danger of being divorced."

The shot was too abrupt for success. She did not at once grasp his meaning, and so she looked at him to ascertain whether or not he was joking. One never knew with that Robinson. But no, he was not joking. On the contrary, he was very grave. Then, slowly, the color left her face, and she turned her head away and pretended to busy herself with the kettle. He watched her without pity, while she fumbled about aimlessly and blindly, and he did not relent when she secretly put the sleeve of her apron to her eyes.

"What do you mean?" she whispered at length. "Tell me what you mean."

"I mean that Bruno is meeting Madelon almost every day, and that soon he will leave you for her."

"Who—who is Madelon?"

It was Robinson's turn to be astonished. It had not occurred to him that she knew nothing

of the existence of Madelon. Every one else in the quarter knew of Madelon—every one at least who knew Bruno.

“Come,” he said harshly, “do not pretend ignorance. Madelon is—was—well, Madelon will soon be cooking old Bruno’s dinner, just as you are doing now—only better than you are doing now, for you appear to be doing it very badly.”

“Ah,” said Diane, “I understand what you mean. I detest you!”

“That, I suppose,” murmured Robinson, “would undoubtedly follow. But a kind action is its own reward, so I ask for nothing more. I can but urge you to keep your beautiful eyes open—his correspondence, for example. Watch it closely. Open it, if it appears suspicious. It is often done, and a woman in your position should and must defend herself. Men are brutes—untrustworthy brutes. I am one, myself.”

“You,” cried Diane—“you! You are shameful, you are ignoble! Go away—you have made me miserable.”

“I am sorry,” said Robinson, “and I go. Only remember—watch the letters he receives, and if some day you should need the air, follow Bruno on one of his walks. You will doubtless find it interesting and—er—illuminating. Dear madame, I say to you adieu.”

His work done, he left her. Magnificent Robinson!

When he had gone, she threw herself on her bed and cried, and for the first time wished that she was back home at Evremont-sur-Seine. And then, gradually, she ceased to cry, and since she was very human, her dismay turned to anger. As I have said, there was always the trace of a devil lying latent in Diane; and if any woman has within her a latent devil it can most easily be aroused by the whip of jealousy.

It was unfortunate that at this moment the elderly bearded lady who served as concierge panted up the stairs bearing Madelon's letter to Bruno.

Diane took the letter, studied the writing on the envelope, turned a little white and breathless, and went slowly to the kitchen where the kettle was steaming on the stove. The kettle, the steam, the insecurely sealed envelope, and a jealous devil within her—the combination triumphed and the angels wept.

She read Madelon's literary effort grimly and scornfully, and as Madelon had been contemptuous of her, so now she became contemptuous of Madelon. An illiterate little creature who culled her phrases obviously from a *Manual*!—all except the postscript, of course, which might have been the work of the daughter of a cab-driver.

Surely Bruno, the great artist, the intellectual, the wise man of his circle, could not be lured by such a one. Her reasoning, of course, was fallacious, for she did not understand the

inconsistencies of men, and moreover, she sadly overestimated the refinement of Bruno's nature. But an older, more sophisticated woman might have well made the same mistake, for few women can see any virtue in their rivals.

Before resealing the letter, she hesitated. Should she destroy it, should she deliver it to Bruno apparently intact and unread, or should she frankly confront him with it? Determining on a compromise, she took pen and ink and, in carefully executed block letters added one more postscript:—"J'y suis, j'y reste." Then she resealed the envelope, placed it on Bruno's desk and hastened to cook the dinner.

IV

THE two days that intervened between the receipt of Madelon's letter and the Thursday for which had been set the rendezvous with Bruno, were for Diane days of indecision, of despair, and of wrath.

Bruno's reception of the letter had been a trying moment. He had glanced at the address and had retired immediately to the bedroom to read the contents unseen and undisturbed. On emerging from this seclusion, he had cast her a sharp, inquisitorial glance from under his deep brows. She had simulated unconcern and noth-

ing had been said; but the postscript must have intrigued him—must have unsettled him a little. Still, there was no means by which he could be certain that it was Diane who had added the challenging phrase: "*J'y suis, j'y reste.*" The fact that it applied in no way to Madelon's position would not have prevented that borrower of phrases from having appended it as a gem of purely rhetorical value. So Bruno, wisely, or unwisely, had decided that the less said the better. He, at any rate, would not broach the subject.

Thursday, at five, at the Musée du Luxembourg. Madelon was there, of course, and Bruno, looking furtively behind him, arrived at five minutes past the hour. And Diane, hating herself for spying, but hating Madelon more, saw them meet. She saw Madelon throw her arms around Bruno's neck and kiss him; and then she went home, hating not only herself but all the world.

This time there were no tears. There was, rather, a blinding rage, a hot rage that flamed in her cheeks and that burned her tears dry. A man in her mood would probably have committed murder and been acquitted, but she, being a woman, planned a more subtle revenge.

The information she needed was easily obtained. Madelon Brissonet lived with her father at St. Cloud and came daily to an atelier in the quarter, supposedly to paint. She was seemingly a respectable little bourgeoisie, daugh-

ter of a respectable old bourgeois—a government employee. Now, no one in France is so eminently respectable as a government employee, especially one who holds a minor position, and no one is so proud and so careful of his respectability. Employment by the government is for the honest bourgeoisie the ambition of his youth, the glory of his prime, and the solace of his age.

Diane, consulting a Bottin in the nearest tobacco-shop, read:

“Brissonet, Adolphe—Clerk in the Bureau des P. T. T., 8 bis rue Legrand, St. Cloud.”

That made it very simple. She would go to St. Cloud and call upon Monsieur Adolphe Brissonet, and suggest that his daughter, Madelon, hie herself to a convent for her soul’s sake. True, Monsieur Brissonet would doubtless be heartbroken at the revelation she would make, but—well, other hearts were being broken with impunity, and Diane was in a rage. For the time being hell had no fury like unto her.

Late on the following afternoon she dressed herself in her Sunday clothes—black with a white lace collar—and boarded a train for St. Cloud. Alighting at the square by the Pavillon Bleu, she inquired the direction of the rue Legrand, and was informed that it was ten minutes on foot, up the hill to the right.

“It is wet and the road is muddy,” added the gallant *sergent de ville*, “but madame will find taxis opposite the Pavillon.”

"Thank you," she answered, "but I prefer to walk."

The preference was pretense, for her purse contained only a franc and some coppers.

The rue Legrand was a neat enough little street that ran at an acute angle from the main road along the side of the hill. It was lined with detached villas, fenced off carefully from each other and from the street by stone walls and by iron grilled gates, on each of which hung a plaque bearing the grandiose name of the villa to which it gave access. Number 8 bis was called Villa Marie Antoinette—a strange name for the habitation of an employee of the Third Republic. Doubtless Monsieur Brissonet had purchased the name-plate along with the villa and had been too thrifty to buy a new one.

Diane rang the bell beside the iron gate. She was a little frightened and her heart was beating overfast, but rage had not left it. Moreover, once her mind was made up to a project, it was of her nature to see it through. Witness the fact that she had run away from home—surely a far more daring adventure than this.

After an interval, a thin, neat old woman came down the gravel path to admit her.

"I desire to see Monsieur Brissonet," said Diane firmly—"on a most urgent matter."

"If mademoiselle will enter," replied the neat old woman.

She stepped aside to let Diane through the gate, and then preceded her up the walk be-

tween the closely clipped hedges. When they reached the house—it was at no great distance—the neat old woman said: “If mademoiselle will be so kind as to give her name, I will inform monsieur. He is in the garden at the back, watering the geraniums.”

“Say that it is Mademoiselle Nicolas. I—I know his daughter.”

Instantly the neat old woman’s face brightened, and she broke into a kindly smile.

“A friend of Mademoiselle Madeleine,” she said. “Monsieur will be so rejoiced to greet you.”

Diane answered nothing.

They traversed a narrow hallway which led through the house to the garden in the rear. It was a symmetrical little garden laid out with precision on geometrical lines. A bed of geraniums on one side balanced a bed of geraniums on the other. A path ran down the middle and, exactly in the centre of the garden, made a circle around a small pool of water where floated six lily-pads, three on a side. Admirers of the pool were supposedly accommodated by six green iron chairs, also three on a side. At the far end of the garden, in the corners of the wall, Monsieur Brissonet had planted two plum-trees, one of which was not doing well and caused him much anxiety. It probably caused him more anxiety than anything else in his life at that time. The year before, of course, had been different: he had been greatly upset and

very much excited, for it was that year that he had determined to have new tiles put on the coping of the garden-wall. True, the new tiles were not yet in place, but at least the decision had been made. That and the death of the cat had made it a very feverish year.

When Diane stepped into the garden Monsieur Brissonet was, as the neat old woman had foreseen, watering the geraniums. His back was turned at the moment, so all that Diane could see of him was a thin stooping figure in a brown linen duster and a broad-brimmed, black felt hat.

"Monsieur!" called the neat old woman shrilly, and obtaining no response, again: "Monsieur! There is a lady!"

The stooping figure straightened up and turned inquiringly, and then Monsieur Brissonet, rather reluctant to leave his task unfinished, advanced toward Diane.

"It is Mam'selle Nicolas, a friend of Mam'selle Madeleine," explained the neat old woman.

Monsieur Brissonet immediately quickened his pace and came to Diane, his face beaming, his two hands outstretched. He was short and slight, and agile as a restless bird. He had a round red face and a smart white mustache, and, when he removed his hat, Diane saw that he was quite bald save for a scant semicircle of white hair like a beard put on the back of his neck. His gray eyes sparkled alertly behind a

pair of spectacles. In short, he appeared to be a very kindly old man.

"I come Alphonsine," he cried. "I come!" And come he did, so effusively that Diane feared he was about to embrace her. Instead he took her hands and drew her to a bench near a round table.

"Mademoiselle," he said, "I am greatly honored. Any friend of my Madeleine is welcome to whatever I have. Give yourself the trouble to sit here and Alphonsine will bring us some cakes and a glass of wine. Alphonsine, the *old* port, and whatever cakes there are. We will sit here where we can see the garden, and mademoiselle and I will talk a little and become acquainted while we wait for the return of Madeleine."

Alphonsine, greatly excited, hurried off to obey.

"But, monsieur—" began Diane, and stopped.

"I expect Madeleine at any moment," he pursued when he noticed her hesitation. "Sometimes she is detained at the atelier with her painting-lessons. But I do not complain. She has talent—undoubted talent—all her professors say so. And I think it is good to encourage it. And she loves the work, does she not? Ah, that must be wonderful—so wonderful—to be an artist and to have the means to study. But you, yourself, mademoiselle, doubtless you are also an artist. Tell me about yourself and

your work—Madeleine tells me so little. She is very modest and will not talk. But I know she is doing well—perhaps you will tell me all about it. You see, I am so far away from everything here at St. Cloud, and all day long I sit at my desk, so that I never, except on Sundays, have an occasion to go down to the city. But mine is good work, I think. It is steady work and it is for the country and the republic. Ah, yes, for the republic! I served under the empire when I was a lad—but I am a staunch republican. The republic has given me my little house and my garden and my daily bread, and I am grateful to it, for what else does a man desire? And more, it has given me the ability to set aside a little money for Madeleine. But the empire—” he stopped and smiled wistfully—“the empire gave me only a bullet in my arm and this to wear in my buttonhole.”

He drew back the collar of his linen duster and pointed proudly to a red ribbon in the lapel of his coat.

“The Legion!” murmured Diane.

“Yes,” he said. “And yet we surrendered to them. I wish we had it to do over again with the First Napoleon to lead us. It would have been different—very different. . . . But I am talking about myself, and that I can do any time to the old Alphonsine. It is you who should talk and I who should listen. Tell me, now, do you study in the same atelier with my Madeleine?”

"There is a mistake, monsieur," stammered Diane. And then she steeled herself and continued:

"I do not work in the atelier with Madeleine. I am not a painter."

"Ah!" exclaimed Monsieur Brissonet, "a sculptor, of course. What a wonderful art! Three dimensions instead of two. I have a friend here in St. Cloud who is a sculptor, so you perceive I am well acquainted with your profession. He has done some excellent work at Père-Lachaise. Urns and wreaths and torches and even, in one instance, the complete figure of an angel bearing a wreath of laurel. That was for the grave of a soldier—a poor old fellow who died four years ago and left nothing but a rusty sword and a dented cuirass. He had been in the cavalry under MacMahon. My friend the sculptor did the monument and charged nothing. He has such a big heart that I tell him he will die in the poorhouse. Now, I—I am very selfish. What I do not give to Madeleine or set aside for her *dot*, I spend on this little house and garden. Of course I do not earn very much, but it is a good, steady work and it is for the republic. . . . So you are a sculptor?"

The arrival of Alphonsine, bearing port and cakes, saved Diane a reply. The neat old woman served her with a friendliness that was unmistakable; and when she had poured the wine and passed the cakes, it was only too

evident that she nourished the idea of lingering to listen to the conversation.

"It is of Mademoiselle Madeleine that one talks?" she inquired pointedly. "Monsieur permits that I remain?"

Monsieur Brissonet laughed.

"There is the adoring old servant who speaks," he explained to Diane. "That little Madeleine of mine—how she wins every one! It is but recently that she was chosen as 'L'Enfant de Marie' for the village. But perhaps you do not know what it signifies to be chosen 'L'Enfant de Marie'? It means that you are the young girl of the community who has the most blameless character and displays the greatest influence for good."

"I know, monsieur," said Diane. "My sister was once an 'Enfant de Marie.'"

"Ah, that is good—that is very good. I am sure that you, yourself, mademoiselle, were a close competitor for the honor. And so you are Catholic? They tell me it is old-fashioned under the republic, but I persist. I think it is greatly out of respect for the memory of my wife, Madeleine's mother. Poor Madeleine has had no mother for a long time—except Alphonsine, here, who has looked after Madeleine and me ever since my wife died. How many years ago was that, Alphonsine?"

"Sixteen," replied the neat old woman gravely. "Monsieur knows as well as I. Does not monsieur hang her picture with *crépe* at

every anniversary— May the saints cherish her in heaven.”

“*Ainsi soit-il*,” said Monsieur Brissonet, and blew his nose loudly with a red handkerchief.

“I wish you could have known Madeleine’s mother,” he continued. “She would have been so pleased to have welcomed you here, and she would have done it so much more gracefully than I. She was brought up with the saints. That is what I always told her. It was my little joke. You see her family used to keep a little shop here in the village, where one bought images of the saints and crucifixes and missals and funeral wreaths. So I would tell her she was brought up with the saints. . . . But, mademoiselle, a thousand pardons. I am very stupid, I have made you cry. My poor child, what will Madeleine say to me when she sees I have made you cry. Never shall I forgive myself to have talked along about these sad things—I who in my stupidity fancied I was telling you my little joke. Will you pardon me, my dear child?”

He leaned toward her with real concern clouding his round red face, and his eyes pleaded behind the spectacles. Timidly he ventured to pat her hand.

“The poor darling is tired,” said Alphonsine, forgetting all formality.

“Yes,” agreed Diane. “Yes, I think that I am very tired. It is you, monsieur, who must

pardon me. I have perhaps been working too hard at—at the atelier.”

She sat up and dried her eyes; but her resolution had left her. Never could she bring herself now to shatter this simple old man's pride and peace. Madeleine she could have struck at, but not Madeleine's father. And it was such a trivial thing that had brought her to this conclusion—the mention of a shop where were sold wreaths and crucifixes and little figures of saints. Trivial! But was it trivial? Of a sudden it became to her all of life. For it was in just such a shop that she had lived with her mother and sister, and it was such a shop that she had left behind her on the night that she had stolen away to Paris. That shop became no longer a shop but a symbol—a symbol of what she had so lightly abandoned, but which from her birth had been bred deep within her. I do not believe that as yet it was a sense of guilt that urged her, it was rather a transcending desire to return to the hearth—to familiar and loved faces—to her mother, and Véronique, and the curé, and to her mother's shop and the curé's church on the square, and to Evremont and the soothing murmur of the Seine whispering to the poplars.

“I must go, Monsieur Brissonet,” she said, rising. “I ask pardon, but I must go. I cannot wait.”

“I am sorry,” said he, and meant it. “It is too bad—Madeleine should be here long

ago. Do you care to leave some message, perhaps?"

"Yes," said Diane, and hesitated. Then, holding out both hands to Monsieur Brissonet, she said: "Tell Madeleine that I am very glad I came. And tell her that to have seen you has done me a great deal of good."

V

WHEN she returned to the studio that evening, Bruno was sitting by the stove, smoking a pipe, impatient for his dinner.

"Bruno," she said, "you will have to cook your own dinner to-night and eat it alone."

"What is that?" said he.

"I am leaving you," she answered quietly.

"Leaving!" he exclaimed, setting down his pipe in mild surprise. "Where are you going?"

"Home—to Evremont."

"Come," he said kindly, "what—what is the trouble?"

"The trouble is with me. You have not changed. I have. So I am leaving you."

He opposed the resolution sincerely and vehemently. He swore to his fidelity—he denied all others but her. It was in vain.

With a franc and a few coppers in her purse and a slim bundle of clothing under her arm, she went out of the studio, leaving him too dazed to remonstrate further.

That night she procured a bed at the cost of the franc. The next morning she procured food at the cost of the coppers. But the following night she sat on a bench by the river in a thin drizzle of cold rain. She had not enough in her purse to pay for the journey home.

Once again she tried to find employment, and earned four sous for scrubbing a floor in a bookshop on the rue du Bac. That was all.

When she had gone without food for two days she had only the strength left to sit on a bench and dream. She visioned the red roofs of Evremont, shining clean and bright in the morning sun; the square where the sparrows fought around the watering-trough; the fields sloping down to the poplar-lined river.

But it was nearly thirty kilometres to Evremont by the road, and it was by the road that she must go if she were to go at all.

She said to herself: "I shall not have strength to reach it, but I will start. If I die on the way they will know I tried my best to come home, and perhaps they will forgive me. Yes, it is better to make the effort. Besides, the river is very cold."

When she reached this decision it was night, and she slept once more on a bench by the Seine. She was aroused by the voice of Paris—the shouts of the teamsters, the whistles of the river boats, the singsong of the peddlers. She shivered, for the dawn was cold and damp. When she stood up she swayed dizzily and clutched

at the bench to steady herself. Before her the Seine flowed smoothly, gray and sullen save where a pale shaft of sunlight penetrated the haze and shone on the ripples like dull copper. She stood contemplating the river for a while. Then she shook her head and said aloud: "The roadside is nicer than the river." So she turned her back on the river and started for home.

FEET OF GOLD

I

WHEN Ferdinand Taillandy, poet, pagan, and wanderer on the face of the earth, had completed his great epic he felt, surging high within him, the call of Paris. For eight years he had traversed on foot the untrammelled wilds, keeping his ear ever close to the breast of nature, that his soul might be in tune with her moods. For eight years he had worshipped nature, seeking no divinity save her, and finding in her one god made manifest in many forms. To his deep-seeing eyes there were dryads lurking in the trees and in the glades and in the groves; there were naiads in the springs and in the rivers and in the lakes; there were nereids in the seas, and always there was Pan, piping in the forests or on the hills. And so he bent the knee to all nature, and knew no other god but her.

But, his epic finished, he craved, like all poets, a publisher—he was not content to sing merely to himself. And, moreover, he knew that the epic was good. The need of a publisher, then, was his pretext for turning his face to the north and to Paris, but it was scarcely this need that so quickened his feet and his heart. It was

more than that, certainly—it was rather the exhilaration that the exile feels when he is about to return home.

Said Taillandy to himself: "I left Paris of my own will; I despise Paris; Paris has caused me only great suffering; Paris is neither Christian nor pagan; if I go to Paris I am a retrograde—but, oh, ye gods, hasten my feet and strengthen my heart, that I may get to Paris the more quickly!"

This is comprehensible and excusable only because Paris was his first home. Granting that (and any one will vouch for it), the conclusion is as inevitable as that of a geometrical proposition, and we can wonder only that he resisted the homing instinct so long.

He went north by forced marches, following the Rhone through Avignon and Valence to Lyon, and the Saône to Chalon; thence by Dijon, Tonnerre, Sens, and Melun, to Paris and the Porte de Charenton. The last twenty-five kilometres he made during the night, for something kept him at it, made him loath to stop and sleep with the goal so close.

It was a thick, heavy morning, then, in November when he passed through the octroi and said to himself: "I am home." And it was a morning of mist that was almost rain. The stallions, harnessed in single file to the market-carts, were slipping on the treacherous cobblestones, straining with all their magnificent shoulders at the traces—supremely willing but not

always successful. Taillandy, appreciative of the play of their muscles, stopped to admire them; and while he stopped he became aware of a woman standing at his elbow.

He did not trouble to look at her, for women, as individuals, were of little account in his life. He had loved one woman once and been sorry for it. That was enough. Perhaps she had been afraid of his intensity; perhaps he had given her too much of himself; perhaps he had endeavored to halo mortal clay—or perhaps she had been simply a timorous, flexible little thing with an empty blond head and a heart that he, at least, had been unable to quicken. At any rate, I know that she had told him that she loved him, and then the first breeze of parental opposition had blown her into another man's arms. That is the story—we will not strive to place the blame.

To Taillandy, then, women were interesting only *en masse*: they stood for something, they *must* stand for something. After all, one-half the population of the earth could not exist merely that children might be born. No, there was doubtless some mystery about them that accounted for their existence—above all, that accounted for their power. Why else should they (as they undoubtedly did) motivate men? Why should they have swayed nations and killed kings? He gave it up, but he continued, nevertheless, his ardent worship of Diana the Huntress and of Venus Genetrix.

The woman who stood at Taillandy's elbow was, at first glance, in no way a remarkable person, and it was by sheer accident that they came to know each other. A slippery pavement, three stallions harnessed to an overloaded cart, a quick-tempered driver—there was the accident, and there the beginning of Taillandy's further education in women.

The cart had stopped in the middle of the road, just within the gates, and the three stallions seemed powerless to move it forward. Obviously this delayed traffic, and the *agent de police* on duty became flushed and excited, imparting much of his mood to the driver of the cart. The driver unsheathed his whip, short of handle and long and cruel of lash, and sent it circling and shivering across the back of the leader. It was poor policy, for the animal had not been unwilling. At the stroke he started, slipped and plunged in the traces; his hoofs struck sparks from the pavement as they slid and floundered, struggling in vain for a foothold, and finally, snorting and writhing, his legs went from under him and he fell over on his side.

The woman next to Taillandy gave a little cry, half fear and half pity, and clutched at his arm. When he turned he saw that she was very white—and not unbeautiful.

"Come," he said, "let us get out of this. There is nothing one can do when beasts are whipping beasts."

She tottered, clinging to his elbow.

"I think," she said, "that I am going to faint."

"I am sorry; try not to for a moment," he recommended.

He almost carried her to the nearest sidewalk café, put her into an iron chair behind an iron table, and ordered a cognac.

She drank it and shivered at the heat of it.

"Thank you, monsieur," she said. Then, slowly and for the first time, she raised her eyes to look at him.

Taillandy still clung to his thirties, and his eight years of nomadic life had kept him young and buoyant. He was not handsome—he was remarkable. Once you had seen him you would never forget him: those eyes with the sparkle of the poet burning in them; that thin, brown face with the crooked mouth and the hawk's nose; those slim, capable hands; and that lean, restless body, jutting out angularly from his abominable clothes.

The woman looked at him, and her eyes widened in astonishment. Looking at her, he reflected that astonishment became her. She was at her best expressing astonishment.

"I am very hideous, am I not?" he remarked pleasantly—almost casually.

Recovering herself, she looked quickly away, and answered very demurely and properly:

"I beg your pardon, monsieur; of course you are not at all hideous. And I am very grateful

to you. You were kind—and—and I am afraid that I detain you.”

He laughed a little—quietly, as men laugh who are accustomed to being alone.

“My dear,” said he, “from what do you detain me? Am I not in Paris where I wish to be? What more can I desire? Should I someday scale Olympus and be admitted through the gates, do you suppose that, once inside, I should object to being detained by—well, let us say by Diana?”

She did not follow this flight—naturally not—but she caught at the last word.

“Diane!” she exclaimed. “How strange that you should have guessed my name!”

“You are called Diane?” he inquired.

“But yes,” she affirmed.

“*Et voilà*,” said he, stretching out his hands as if he had won his case. “You see? Great is Diane!—Diane of what?—of the Ephesians?”

She shook her head, at a loss.

“No,” she said—“of Evremont-sur-Seine.”

The name must have awakened some memory for him, for he frowned and squinted up his eyes.

“No, no—don’t tell me,” he commanded, as she was about to speak. “Let me think. Evremont-sur-Seine . . . Ah! I have it! A village on the river with poplars patrolling the banks. A little iridescent village, all light and bright and clean—with a watering-trough in the

square—and sparrows. Yes, hundreds of sparrows. And a lark or two for the morning. And a shop where, if one is a Christian, one should take off one's hat and kneel. Ah, yes—now I remember, now I remember! She was called Madame Nicolas, she who kept the shop, and she was a saint. I am no Christian—I am a pagan—but Madame Nicolas . . . Ah, well, one does not have to be a Christian to do homage to a Christian saint."

He was carried out of himself; he was aglow with the enthusiasm of remembering; and he was disappointed to find that Diane remained quiet, unkindled.

"You don't know her, then," he protested—"you don't know Madame Nicolas?"

She shook her head, and he perceived, at length, that she was crying as quietly and secretly as possible.

"Ah," said he softly, and then again, "Ah!" But for the present he said no more about Madame Nicolas. Rather he arose, called loudly for the check, paid it, put his hand on her shoulder, and, with great heartiness, exclaimed: "Now we shall go and breakfast. You are hungry and so am I. We shall traverse Paris and breakfast at the Closerie des Lilas, where, once upon a time, I was at home. Come—*allons, mon enfant! En avant!*"

She protested—not very vehemently. She claimed she was not a cheerful companion; he had better seek some one else; it was one of her

sad days. Besides, she was not well dressed—her shoes and her blouse . . . He laughed loudly, pointed to his own rags, and more especially to the hole in the top of his hat which revealed his straight, long black hair.

"What do we care for clothes!" he cried. "Are we not young and beautiful? Diana and—and Pan. Hand in hand they will now enter a *fiacre*!"

He was not to be thwarted in his holiday mood. Moreover, for some reason or other, the thought of quitting her displeased him. He wanted a companion to encourage him, to laugh at and with him, above all to listen to him. Perhaps he was beginning at last to realize in a small way why it is good that women exist.

Taillandy, at least, enjoyed that drive to the full. He was thrusting his head constantly from the windows to point out places that he remembered and places that he would never forget. At first they kept to the Seine—he couldn't see enough of the Seine—and he prided himself on his ability to call each bridge by its name.

"Presently," said he, "when we have passed the Halle aux Vins, we shall come to the Boulevard Saint-Germain. Then we shall leave the river. . . . There, what did I tell you? *Au revoir*, Seine! Hail, Musée de Cluny and Ecole de Médecine! To the left, *cocher*! One must see the Odéon. Ah, the famous days—and the famous nights, *parbleu*!"

Always he grew more eager, more excited. By Zeus, was he not back again in his own Paris after eight years? Why, then, pretend to be calm? Diane, of course, had not attempted to suggest that he be calm. She liked him the way he was—tempestuous, vibrant, a boy.

They drew up with a flourish in front of the *Closerie des Lilas* on the *Boulevard du Montparnasse*. It was his favorite haunt in the old days, in the old days eight years ago when he damned women and strove to forget them all because one had forgotten him. There it was that men had first called him great; there it was that, when he was sober, much of his early poetry had been written; and there it was that they had crowned him king. He found that, as he paid the driver, his eyes were dim.

"My dear," said he to Diane, "if you don't make me laugh, I shall begin to cry."

"What is it that troubles you?" she asked, a hand on his arm.

He smiled crookedly and answered: "Eight years of absence—that is all."

"It is a great deal," said she soberly. "I understand."

He changed his mood with an effort, and became deliberately gay.

"Ah, well," he cried, "we shall see what is altered. We shall see whether they still remember Ferdinand Taillandy."

He was not kept long in doubt. A waiter in shirt-sleeves and apron who was brushing the

floor, stood up from his task as they entered, and, seeing Taillandy, raised his hands heavenward in a delirium of joy and astonishment.

"But it is Monsieur Ferdinand!" he cried. "Or else perhaps his ghost!"

Taillandy, jubilant at the immediate recognition, extended two hands and said warmly: "My good Hippolyte—my good Hippolyte!"

A buxom lady in black came hurrying out from behind her high desk, her fingers busy at her hair (for she was not too young to be vain).

"Monsieur Ferdinand!" she exclaimed—"is it truly you returned to us? You will kill us with such sudden joy!" And she put a hand to her heart—or as close to her heart as her figure permitted.

"Dear Madame Maupin," answered Ferdinand, embracing her frenziedly. "You grow younger and more beautiful each year. Of what marvellous waters do you drink?"

"Always the Vichy Celestins," she answered; and then she slapped him coyly and said: "*Vieux blagueur!*"

For some minutes they stood off to appraise him, to take him all in, to see what changes eight years had wrought in him. Diane, temporarily neglected, hung in the background until Taillandy, feeling that she was ill at ease, led her forward by the arm and presented her to Madame Maupin as "his little friend Diane."

"But I know Mademoiselle Diane," said the

caissière. "Were you not here a few nights ago with Monsieur Bruno, the artist?"

Diane nodded and blushed, looking quickly at Taillandy and as quickly away.

"Yes, madame," she said.

"Ah," said Taillandy—"with old Bruno, hein? I am surprised that that one still lives. And how do you like old Bruno?"

"He was kind," answered Diane. "Yes, he was kind. When I was starving he fed me."

"It was the least he could do!" exclaimed Taillandy—"the old satyr!"

Then he turned on her so suddenly that she started back with a little cry, frightened.

"And now!" he cried—"and now! How long is it since you have eaten? Answer me that. Or does Bruno still feed you?"

"I have left Monsieur Bruno," she replied after an interval.

"How long is it since you have eaten, I ask?" interrupted Taillandy fiercely.

"When I met you, monsieur," she said bravely, "I was going to breakfast."

He grunted his disbelief.

"Where were you going to breakfast? At the Porte de Charenton? Not likely."

"I was going home to breakfast."

"Ah, you were going home? To Evremont-sur-Seine? Twenty-six kilometres, hein?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"And how were you going?"

"I was planning to walk, monsieur," she said.

"Ah—*voilà!* Now at last we have it. You were going to walk twenty-six kilometres for your breakfast because you didn't have a copper sou. That pig of a Bruno! Why do the gods allow such tragedies on earth! Here, Hippolyte—hasten thyself—covers for two, and all that is best in the house. The poor child starves while we air our vocabularies. It is criminal—it is unbelievable. *Allez—heup!*"

She permitted him to lead her to a seat—he did it in the grand manner, but cheerfully and with many lavish gestures, gallantly pretending that he did not see the tears in her eyes. And while they ate he regaled her with a spirited monologue. He dwelt much on her name—that seemed to delight him—and he elaborated on it, calling her his Diana of the Moon, or his Goddess of the Chase. It amused him to pretend that they were feasting on Olympus. She, of course, was unable to follow his rhetoric, but so long as he enjoyed himself she was pleased; and she ate with a good appetite and no affectation.

When she had finished the *omelette aux fines herbes* the color came back into her cheeks and she was able to laugh with him. He bade Hippolyte, whom for the moment he had christened Bacchus, to fetch them some red wine from the cellar—"a good wine, Bacchus, not too heavy; a wine in which one can taste the grapes."

It was forthcoming, and he drank her health very gravely—her health and her *beaux yeux*;

for he now perceived for the first time that she had large, dark eyes.

At the coffee he stretched his long legs straight out under the table, lighted a cigarette, and sighed comfortably and profoundly.

"Now," said he, with a smile at his mouth, "I will talk about myself. Shall you like that?"

"But yes," she encouraged him naïvely; "you talk so well. You must have studied a great deal. I, as you see, am very ignorant. I know nothing."

He laughed quietly.

"Come," he said, "that is not so. You know a great deal. You knew enough to start for home when you were hungry. I, on the contrary, when I was hungry—I went away from home and lost myself for eight years. But it was not food-hunger that drove me away. Rather it was the hunger for consolation. That is why I went alone. One communes better with nature when one is alone. You see, the stars will not sing for an audience, and the trees will not whisper to a crowd. And the nymphs—ah, yes, my friend, the nymphs are shy."

He paused, not to contemplate her, but, perhaps, to contemplate his thoughts.

"You are a poet," said she, her eyes large with wonder and admiration.

"I hope so," he answered—"I hope so."

"You are a great poet," she continued with growing awe.

"I thank you," said he. "At least I am not a prolific one."

This brought him up to the remembrance of his epic and the reason for his being in Paris. I think that he had been in a fair way to forget both—he was so completely at home there at his favorite table that the eight years of wandering and working seemed scarcely to have intervened.

"Ha!" he exclaimed—"that brings me to myself. I have work to do this morning. I must see my publisher. And you, my Diane, what do you intend to do?"

She shrugged her shoulders. What was there for her to do? He questioned her a little. Did she desire to return home to Evremont-sur-Seine? She did not know. She was afraid they would not want her. But had she not thought to return there this morning when he had met her at the Porte de Charenton?

"Yes, monsieur," she said in a very low voice. "I was very tired and I had not eaten, and—and I knew that I should not be able to walk that far. But I thought that it would be better to try."

He looked at her searchingly. Then said he: "What you mean to say is that you thought it would be better to drop by the roadside than to fall into the river."

She nodded. "Yes, monsieur. I was not happy."

"Compassionate gods!" he cried, banging the

table with his fist. "You were not happy! There speaks *Mélisande*. No, indeed, you were not happy! You were wretched, you were miserable, you were starving, and your poor little heart was dying within you—fluttering and trembling like a stricken bird. There, that is the city for you—that is the city's work."

Here, forgetting his recent enthusiasm for that self-same city, he relapsed into the mood of bitterness and distrust that had driven him from Paris eight years ago. He condemned the city and everything connected with it—it was artificial, it was brutal, it was sordid, it was ugly, it was selfish, it was a tyrant. It stifled the heart and it murdered the soul.

His philippic ending as abruptly as it had begun, he reached across the table and took her hand.

"Listen, my little one," he said, "listen to me. You are too young and too sweet to remain in this pest-hole. I am going to care for you from now on—you shall be my charge. I am going to snatch you from the maw of this monster of a city before it gets your heart and your soul as well as your body. It will be one good deed at least credited to the account of Ferdinand Tailandy before he dies. They can carve it on my tombstone if they wish: 'He plucked a flower from the mire of a Christian city and planted it in the garden of the gods.' Ha! That is something to have done, is it not? And I shall revel in it. To-morrow we shall start—you and I.

To-morrow in the clean, white dawn. And I shall lead you to the garden. I will take you by the hand and show you the wide spaces of the world; and you shall behold the sun with new eyes; and the breeze shall blow through your unbound hair; and you shall bathe in the streams and rest on the sweet earth and sleep dreamlessly under the singing stars! . . . Will you come with me?"

She hesitated, seeking words with which to refuse, but finding none, it was finally a woman's reason that she voiced.

"I have nothing to wear, monsieur—" she began timidly.

He swept the objection aside with a grand gesture of his arm.

"So much the better!" he cried. "We shall travel the lighter. Will you come with me?"

She thrilled to his enthusiasm. She was proud to be his follower.

"I will go with you anywhere," she said, "whenever you say you are ready." And she gave him her two hands across the table as a pledge. He took them, sawed them violently up and down in the air, reached over and kissed her fraternally on the forehead.

"Good!" he said. "Meet me here for dinner at seven this evening. We will plan. Now I go to my publisher. *Au revoir.*"

Before she realized it he was out of the room; but, as suddenly, he was back again.

"Here," he explained, "I have almost for-

gotten. One must pay to live and we shall be separated for ten hours. Take this and buy yourself some solid boots and some thick stockings. One should be well shod to climb Olympus."

II

THAT was a memorable night at the Closerie des Lilas—and not only that night, but, I regret to say, several ensuing nights; for Taillandy, to Diane's chagrin, could not bear to tear himself away from the city and his old disciples and comrades. Once more he forgot how intensely he hated Paris, remembering only how madly he loved it. The pagan child of nature reverted and became the *boulevardier* and the café prophet.

But that first night was responsible for the lapse. Taillandy enjoyed himself so hugely on that first night that it was only human of him to crave a second and a third. It was always: "To-morrow morning, my little Diane, we will leave all this behind us," and always on the morrow there was some unreasonable reason why the departure should be postponed.

Diane, disappointed grievously at first, grew depressed and then worried. Had her great godlike poet, then, feet of clay? She thrust the suspicion resolutely from her as unworthy, and instead, womanlike, she endeavored to see what she could do to help him. She knew that he

was too good to be wasting his days and his nights in the Closerie des Lilas. She knew, too, that champagne is no fitting diet for poets—especially for poets who are great enough to be inspired without it—and so she found herself mothering her hero. Worshipping him, of course—she would always do that—but mothering him at the same time. A curious state of affairs.

Taillandy's publishers, it seemed, had been exuberantly glad to see him. His *Triomphe de l'Amour* and his *Tombeau de l'Amour* had made him famous, and his eight years of absence had given him a sort of posthumous halo. If he were not dead, why, so much the better. In brief, they gave him a thousand francs in advance for the epic and a generous royalty on its sale.

Of that thousand francs Taillandy spent seven hundred and ninety-six during the next four days—ninety-six, possibly on himself, and the balance on his friends.

He had returned to the Closerie des Lilas that first afternoon and had instructed Hippolyte and Madame Maupin that he intended to entertain that evening from dinner-time to dawn. They were to invite any and all of his old associates whom they should see. Everything in the house was to be free, and he, by Bacchus, would foot the bills.

The result was that when Taillandy entered the Lilas at seven o'clock he was amazed to

discover what an army of friends he could lay claim to. Never had the café been so crowded.

There was Bruno, the artist, who, remembered with an inexplicable pang, was also Diane's friend; there was Jacques Gaumont, a minor poet who was attempting to follow in the great Taillandy's footsteps, and who succeeded merely in being very shabbily dressed and very enthusiastic; there was Baskoff, the Russian, a sculptor of the futurist school, half mad and wholly unprepossessing; there was *le petit* Martel, in velveteens, who cried loudly for a return to the good old days of Bohemia, but who sometimes dined surreptitiously at the Café de Paris in full-dress clothes with a *chapeau à huit reflets*; there were the two bearded, gray-headed veterans who remembered Delacroix and very little else; there was a young architect or two from the Beaux-Arts, and there were a score of others—nondescripts, driftwood, some of them mad but talented, others mediocre but sane. Also, there were a dozen girls—models, midinettes, dancers, and daughters of joy.

At Taillandy's entrance they arose with a roar of delight. They embraced him, they kissed him on both cheeks, they pounded his back, they cheered him deafeningly. He was the only one of them worth while, and subconsciously they knew it and acknowledged it. Moreover, since he had once been one of them, they now felt a certain responsibility in his success. Had they not contributed to his greatness by their

encouragement? Had he not perhaps imbibed some of his inspiration from their companionship? There was not a man there that did not envy his fame, but there was not a man there that begrudged it.

When the first commotion had somewhat subsided, Taillandy commanded Hippolyte to serve dinner. But first he inquired for Diane. Had any one seen Diane?

"Has any one seen whom?" asked Bruno, who was at his elbow.

"Diane—Diane," answered Taillandy impatiently. And then, remembering, he added with a frown: "You know her, Bruno, I believe. At least it was not your fault that she did not starve."

"Ah, you wrong me," said the artist. "I would have fed her for life, but she would not permit it. She left me—she disappeared."

"She did well," replied Taillandy gravely.

Bruno looked at him quizzically, shrugged his shoulders and went to take his place at a table.

"Our Ferdinand is in love," he announced. "That will mean some very bad lyrics, I fear. It is regrettable."

Taillandy remained at the door, smoking furiously, with an eye on the clock. He would not sit down, he said, until Diane arrived. No, nor would he drink. There would be plenty of time for that.

Presently the door opened and Diane stepped

hesitatingly into the smoke-stained light of the restaurant. She was a little out of breath, for she had been walking fast, and there was color in her cheeks and a wet sparkle in her eye.

"Ah, my little one," said Taillandy, "you are late."

"I am sorry," she answered. "I hurried as fast as I could. See, I have bought the stout boots and the thick stockings, as you desired me to do, so that we might climb—what was that mountain?"

"Olympus," said he. "You were wise, for it is a hard climb. Come now and sit down. I have kept a place for you on my right. You will eat while I talk; and you need not listen, for I shall talk nonsense. I intend that this, my one night in Paris, shall be remembered. It is to be a very gay night."

"But we start at dawn to-morrow, do we not?" she reminded him.

"Assuredly, assuredly. That is why we must make the most of these few hours."

He installed her beside him with great ceremony, as if she were the queen of a carnival. Then he motioned to Hippolyte to open the champagne. . . .

Toward midnight Taillandy, in response to repeated toasts to himself and his work, rose rather unsteadily to his feet and made a speech.

"Friends—comrades," he began—"and fellow artists, no man here is better than his neighbor: therefore there is no reason why I should

be called upon to speak ahead of any other man present. All of us are alike in that all of us are seeking, each in his own way, the Truth. Naturally, since all of us are artists, we seek the Truth through Beauty; and when I say Beauty I spell it with a capital B, because Beauty, as I understand it, is more than a noun—it is religion. Now, to my eyes, Beauty exists wherever man does not intrude the ugly work of his hands. The world, if left to itself, would be universally beautiful, and in like manner a man's soul, if isolated and uncontaminated by man-created ugliness, would of necessity be beautiful. A child's soul, for example, is beautiful—how long? Why, until the child learns to talk and hear and understand the evil of men. In short, it is the herding of men together in cities and communities, it is the daily contact with artificiality, it is the galling yoke that we call modern civilization that has banished Beauty out of our lives and so has banished Truth.

“Granting (and I am sure you will grant it) that if a man have no responsibilities he will be happy, we may go on to say that if he be happy he will be in tune with the beautiful and receptive to Beauty. What, then is the lesson? Does it not cry aloud in your ears? Be free! Throw off the shackles of civilization that weigh you down, go forth into the world, keep close to the Beauty that the gods have revealed to you in nature and, casting down your false idols, bow

the knee only to her. Cease to be slaves—be free!”

He sat down to great applause. Perhaps they were in a mood to applaud anything, for they were unaccustomed to champagne at sixteen francs the bottle. Taillandy drained his glass, refilled it, and drained it again. Then he turned to Diane: “Do not forget,” he said; “we leave at dawn to-morrow.”

“Do you think I could forget?” she reproached him.

But they did not leave at the dawn of the morrow; for at that hour Taillandy was sleeping most uncomfortably on Bruno’s sofa, whither he had been carried with difficulty by three well-meaning but unsteady friends. As for Diane, she had cried herself to sleep in a room over the café that Madame Maupin had placed at her disposal for the night. She was up and dressed, however, at daybreak, hoping against hope that her hero would not forget to come for her; and she waited, sad-eyed at the door, watching the stars pale in the face of the glow that came slowly out of the east, watching the roofs and the chimney-pots take form against a lightening sky, watching the shadows of the houses stretch their blue lengths along the street.

Madame Maupin, descending cheerfully from a dreamless sleep, found her at a table by the door, with her face in her hands. Madame Maupin, taking in the situation with the in-

tuition of a true Frenchwoman, strove to console her, saying: "Come, my little cabbage, you must not cry. He will be back, and there are a great many more mornings ahead of you. He is doubtless a little tired, that is all, and if he is tired you surely do not begrudge him his sleep."

Diane dried her eyes and tried to smile.

"Yes, yes," she said. "I am very foolish. But I love him so much, Madame Maupin."

"Of course you do. Every one does. He is a wonderful man, Monsieur Ferdinand is. And a great poet. You must remember that and make allowances; for all great poets get drunk. They tell me that Monsieur Paul Verlaine was—well, no matter. I do not remember him, and he is dead now. But he was a great poet and a wonderful drinker, too."

Diane, never having heard of Monsieur Paul Verlaine, was of course not greatly interested. She felt that it was all the fault of Paris—that it was Paris that was reaching out hideous, soiled hands to drag her idol from his pedestal. And it was then that the high resolve came to her to save Ferdinand from this soul-devouring monster. I doubt if the irony of the situation entered her mind. I doubt if she remembered that originally it had been he who was to save *her* from the maw of Paris, who was to "pluck the flower from the mire of a Christian city and plant it in the garden of the gods."

At eleven o'clock a perfectly cheerful Taillandy swung into the café, arm-in-arm with Bruno and *le petit* Martel, and found a Diane, serene and resolved, there to receive him.

He kissed her good morning on the forehead, inquired how she had slept, was glad that Madame Maupin had extended her hospitality, and, worst of all, asked Madame Maupin if she would be good enough to repeat the offer that night or any other night should it be necessary. He would gladly pay the bill.

"But," ventured Diane, "do we not leave to-morrow surely?"

"Of course, my little one," he answered—"of course. To-morrow at dawn. But it is well to be prepared in case something should intervene to delay us."

Then, complaining of a headache, he ordered absinthe for three and a *sirop de groseille* for Diane. And he took occasion to warn her never to drink absinthe—it was very injurious and led to all sorts of follies. Diane assured him that she would always abstain from it. She was uncomfortable; her heart was heavy; she wished that Bruno were not present—she hated Bruno—and she believed that, if she were allowed an hour alone with Taillandy, she could persuade him to return to his gods. But Bruno and *le petit* Martel, anticipating perhaps another evening similar to the last, stuck close to Taillandy's elbow, and saw to it that his glass (and their own glasses) remained full.

III

THE first four days that Taillandy spent in Paris had a striking similarity. I have pictured one of them, endeavoring to deal with the poet's temporary downfall as leniently and as delicately as possible. Even average men have their evil moments and are held excusable; how much more readily, then, must we condone the lapses of a genius! I do not pretend that he was blameless, but, remember, he had passed eight years alone, and the reaction was bound to be extreme.

On the evening of the fourth day, when Diane saw that all the signs and omens pointed to another festival night, she took matters into her own hands and made a decisive step. Strange as it may seem, it was Bruno who aided her in her scheme to get Taillandy out of the city. Perhaps Bruno, being more advanced in years, was tiring of the dissipation; perhaps his heart was really excellent at bottom; perhaps he cared for Diane more unselfishly than he chose openly to admit. At any rate he rendered her invaluable assistance.

It was he who interviewed the owner and driver of the covered, two-wheeled market-cart, arranging with him that he should be at the Closerie des Lilas at two o'clock that morning.

"No vegetables, my friend," said Bruno; "we want no vegetables, but we desire plenty of

straw on the floor in order that a stuffed turkey may repose comfortably thereupon. And it will be a large turkey—a hundred and fifty pounds.”

The driver of the cart, disturbed at this, crossed himself violently.

“It is not a corpse that monsieur wishes me to drive in my wagon?”

Bruno laughed cheerfully.

“Not quite,” he answered. “It will be breathing—fire and alcohol; but it will be breathing. Beyond that I promise nothing.”

The driver was scarcely reassured. However, if it breathed, if monsieur guaranteed that it would breathe—well, for five francs more he would take the chance. So it was arranged.

“I have ordered Ferdinand’s hearse,” Bruno reported to Diane.

She cried out in horror. He must not say such things; and she, too, crossed herself precipitately.

At seven o’clock, the hour of dinner, when the fête usually commenced, the Closerie des Lilas was packed to the doors. All the guests were present, hungry, thirsty, licking their lips, but—there was no host.

“Where is he?” whispered Bruno to Diane.

“Where is he?” echoed *le petit* Martel.

“Where is he?” muttered the two veterans who remembered Delacroix.

“Where is he?” chorused the models and the mininettes and the daughters of joy.

Every one had the question, but no one the

answer. Taillandy had not been seen by any one for over two hours. Each thought that he had been with one of the others. It was very strange.

At eight o'clock, with much grumbling, the guests were forced to order their own dinners, which, owing perhaps to the obnoxious prospect of paying the check out of their own pockets, they ate with little relish. Moreover, there was no sparkling wine of Champagne to flavor the meats, and no Taillandy to talk glorious nonsense.

Diane reluctantly, and for want of any plan of action, took her seat between Bruno and *le petit* Martel; but she kept her eyes steadfastly on the door and replied to all conversational efforts only in monosyllables. Nor did she eat.

As the hour advanced the gloom deepened. Bruno and *le petit* Martel, bored and fatigued, hazarded brutal guesses at the cause of Taillandy's non-appearance.

Said Bruno: "He is doubtless drunk in some other café."

Said *le petit* Martel: "It is probable that he has left Paris and gone back alone to converse with his gods."

It was this latter conjecture that hurt Diane the more. She had planned to save him and he had forgotten her very existence. His promises to her had been empty words. Heart-searing thoughts, these.

"Have no fear," she answered Bruno and *le petit Martel* bravely—"have no fear. He will come when he is ready."

"And you," insinuated Bruno, "will wait for him?"

"Yes," she said, "and I will wait for him."

"You are very faithful," observed *le petit Martel* with a snicker.

She flushed a little but let the remark pass. She did not choose to explain to them that she was Taillandy's disciple—not his mistress. Besides, something told her that they would not understand, that they would wink and nudge each other and snicker, even as *le petit Martel* had already snickered.

The clock struck twelve times—twelve weary, discouraged strokes. A few chairs were pushed back, a few checks (very modest ones) were paid, and a few of the guests yawned unaffectedly, said "He will not come," and departed. The two veterans who remembered Delacroix called for the backgammon-board, and immediately forgot the passage of time.

The clock struck the half-hour—timidly, unobtrusively, as if ashamed of itself. The Beaux-Arts students went gloomily home. Bruno lit his pipe and ordered a cognac and coffee. *Le petit Martel*, with a show of bravado called for a bottle of champagne, then discreetly changed his mind and substituted a yellow chartreuse. They, at least, were determined to see it out if they were forced to remain there

until dawn. Diane sat in silence, very tired, very miserable, ready to cry.

The clock struck one, surreptitiously, that people might perhaps think it was merely the half-hour. Hippolyte began to clear the tables and to pile up the chairs for the night. Madame Maupin was stacking up the day's receipts in little piles of copper, silver and gold. The gold pile, she noted, was miserably small that evening.

And then, before the clock was forced to strike again, the door swung violently open and in came Taillandy, hatless, his hair on end, intoxicated, but not with wine. Intoxicated, rather, with the sense of great accomplishment.

He greeted no one, but cried loudly and exultantly: "I have done it! It is completed—and in six hours. Never have I worked so rapidly and so well. For it is good, my friends, it is good. Listen and judge for yourselves if it is not good. Oh, but I was in the vein to-night! I was tired—very tired—and I smoked fifty vile cigarettes and wrote fifty immortal lines. You see, I am not modest. That is because I *know* that it is good."

He was tremendously excited. There was a flush on his cheek-bones as of fever, and a feverish light burned in his eyes. The two sheets of paper that he held trembled and rattled in his hands as he stood in the middle of the room and began to read.

What he read was his "Hymn to Diana Im-

prisoned." We have all read it and recognized it as his greatest lyric; and we all remember, surely, the last quatrain, which some one has translated, poorly enough:

"Why dost thou tarry in the haunts of men?
Cast off the chains that bind thee, burst the bars!
The high gods call and, pleading, call again—
Come forth and live beneath the singing stars!"

Put that back into Taillandy's French and let Taillandy stand up and declaim it to you, and I warrant you'll feel a shiver of exhilaration run up your spine. For Taillandy knew how to read his verse—there is no gainsaying that.

When he finished he had them all fairly on their feet. The women, not understanding much of what he read them, nevertheless wept from sheer excitement, Madame Maupin the most conspicuously and copiously, Diane the most quietly. But there was a good bit of relief mingled with Diane's tears. She had her hero back, more of a hero than ever. Her idol's feet were not of clay but of gold. What woman could resist weeping with such excellent cause?

Vaguely she sensed that the invocation was addressed to her, that the poet had passed his evening in solitude, making her immortal in immortal verse, that, far from being forgotten by him, she had been ever before his inward eyes.

Triumphantly the clock struck two. Bruno was the only one to heed it; and he approached Diane and murmured: "It is two o'clock. The hearse should be at the door. Or shall we call it the triumphal chariot of fire that will bear him, like Elijah, up to heaven."

Before Diane could reply the driver of the two-wheeled cart squeezed his broad bulk through the door. He stood there, whip in hand, searching the room for his clients.

"What do you want?" inquired Taillandy, who was nearest him.

"My passengers," answered the driver.

"And who are they?" the poet persisted.

"God knows," said the driver. "But one of them, they told me, would be very drunk."

"I am very drunk," said Taillandy. "Wine never made me more so. Moreover, I see no one else who is in that condition. Accordingly I retain you. Is your wagon comfortable?"

"There is plenty of straw," answered the driver.

"Good. You are hired then, until dawn; and we start at once."

He went to Diane and took her by the hand.

"Are you ready?" he asked.

"I am ready," said she.

"Then come. Let us return to the true gods who are calling to us."

He bowed very low, first to Madame Maupin, then to the room in general.

"Adieu," said he. "I earnestly hope that

some day you will open your eyes and see that you are slaves."

With Diane on his arm he passed out of the door into the night. The cart stood at the curb, the huge percheron smoking in the chilly air. The driver climbed up into his seat, and Taillandy lifted Diane in his arms and placed her in the straw under the canvas cover. Then he himself took his seat beside the driver.

"You will be cold," suggested the latter.

"You are wrong," answered the poet; "I am on fire."

"As you will, m'sieu'. Where shall I drive to?"

Taillandy bent toward him and whispered in his ear.

"B'en m'sieu'," said the driver. "I know the road well."

IV

AT dawn—a white, cold dawn that turned the frost to silver—a covered two-wheeled cart jolted and rumbled into the public square of the village of Evremont-sur-Seine. Taillandy sat upright on the driver's seat, with the cold light on his gaunt face and a warmer light glowing in his eyes. Behind him, on the straw, lay Diane, sleeping like a child, with a child's smile at her lips.

"To the right here," said Taillandy softly, when they had crossed the square. "To the

right, and then directly to the left. The shop next to the church."

The driver, obeying directions, drew up in front of a small two-story plaster house, the ground floor of which was devoted to a shop. In the windows were crucifixes, artificial wreaths, embroidered altar-cloths, and little gilded and painted images of saints. It was the last place one would have expected a pagan to visit.

But Taillandy, with no hesitation, rapped gently on the door, casting a benevolent glance, meanwhile, on the emblems of Roman Catholicism.

"It is well," he said to himself, "that there should be such people in the world. Does it matter, after all, what kindles the flame so long as it burns brightly?"

An elderly woman came to open the door—a woman with a face like one of her graven saints.

"Madame Nicolas," said Taillandy bowing, "you are awake early. May I come in to warm myself?"

"Certainly," she said. "Be good enough to enter. I am just now lighting the fire in the stove."

He insisted on helping her with the coals. Then he said: "Madame Nicolas, you do not, of course, remember me. It is eighteen years since I used to come to this shop. I remember you, because you are the sort of woman one

does not forget. I am called Ferdinand Taillandy."

"I remember you now, Monsieur Ferdinand," she answered. "You were an interesting boy."

"I take no credit for that," he disclaimed. "All boys are interesting. It is only men and women that are occasionally dull."

He hesitated an instant. Then he said: "Madame Nicolas, are your two daughters well?"

"Véronique is very well," she answered him quietly. "She is in the kitchen. Diane"—she faltered a little—"Diane has left us. She—she is working in Paris. We miss her a great deal."

"Ah," said Taillandy—"exactly."

Madame Nicolas searched his eyes anxiously with hers.

"Madame Nicolas," he continued abruptly after a silence—"Madame Nicolas, do you own a calf?"

"But no, Monsieur Ferdinand!" she exclaimed, surprised.

"That is a pity," he mused. "I regret that you do not own a calf."

"What should I do with a calf?"

"Kill it, of course," he replied brightly—"kill it! In honor of your daughter who is returned to you."

Madame Nicolas half-rose from her chair; then she fell back weakly, trembling.

"Diane," she breathed, "you have news of my Diane?"

"I have more than news, Madame Nicolas, I have Diane herself. She is asleep out there in the covered cart."

"God is merciful," said Madame Nicolas. "He has, in His own good time, answered my prayers."

"So be it," murmured the pagan. "Be very kind to Diane, for she has suffered much."

"Let me go to her," said Madame Nicolas. "My arms ache to hold her."

They went out into the chill morning. But Madame Nicolas did not know that it was cold. Taillandy raised the canvas flap at the back of the cart. Diane still slept on the straw, her head pillowed on her arm. As they watched her she stirred and sat upright, the smile still at her lips, for she had been happy in her sleep.

"Diane!" cried Madame Nicolas. "My blessed baby Diane—my blessed child!"

Taillandy turned away, pretending to shade his eyes from the sun.

"These Christians," he muttered, "are over-demonstrative." And he brushed a tear impatiently from his nose.

When he had hardened himself sufficiently to look around without betraying his lamentable weakness, he saw that he was forgotten. Diane was gathered close to Madame Nicolas's breast, and Madame Nicolas was crooning over her softly, as if, indeed, she were a child.

The poet and pagan shrugged his shoulders with a feeble imitation of his old bravado.

"I fear, Ferdinand," he said to himself—"I fear that you have lost a disciple. Your creed does not seem to be popular. However, you have done to-day what I suppose they would call a 'Christian deed.' *Ainsi soit.*"

He climbed once more up into the driver's seat.

"Where now, m'sieu'?" asked the driver stolidly.

"Where?" repeated the pagan. "Anywhere! Get me away from these Christians. They are weakening to a man's resolution. They sap his manliness. They appeal insidiously to the maudlin, sentimental side of his nature. Bah! That sun is very glaring, driver. Do you see how it makes my eyes water? Turn around and face the south, and flog your horse a little. What was it that King Agrippa said in their Bible? Ah, I have it now: 'Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.' Flog your horse, driver—flog your horse! I must get out of here. It is dangerous, I tell you—dangerous. Flog your horse, driver, and drive me to the south—to the south where the nereids are laughing and leaping and calling to one another across the waves of the far-resounding sea. Farewell, Diane—adieu. I go back alone to the gods."

Obediently the driver plied his whip, the horse broke into a heavy, swaying trot, the

cart bounced and rattled over the cobblestones, and Ferdinand Taillandy, pagan and poet, became once more a wanderer on the face of the earth.

THE END OF THE ROAD

I

ON a June morning Monsieur Silvestre, the landlord of the Café du Levant, sat under the street awning drinking beer with the curé of the little church across the square. They had discussed religion and politics until those vital subjects and the tall foaming glasses were drained dry. Then the landlord ordered a second round and the topic of conversation shifted.

"One hears nothing more of that Ferdinand Taillandy," remarked Monsieur Silvestre. "There was a type for you! There was one, at least, who had no use for your religion. A pagan, he called himself. I suppose, now, you consign men like him to hell-fire."

"I consign no man to hell-fire," answered the curé calmly. "There are some, however, who consign themselves: they think it modern—fashionable."

"You refer to me, perhaps?" suggested the landlord quickly.

The curé laughed, shaking his head.

"You!" he echoed. "Why should I refer to you, my friend? Before this year is out you will be coming to me for confession and communing at the altar. I have no fears for you."

He paused to raise the glass to his lips. Then he added: "It is of Taillandy I am speaking. Monsieur Silvestre, the church wants that man—he is too good to lose. So admirable a pagan—think what a Christian one could make of him! I wish I had him here."

The landlord nodded his head sarcastically.

"Yes," said he, "it would be a pleasure to see you two together. Taillandy talks well. He could argue with you more effectively than I. Yes, it would be a pleasure—for me."

"My friend," said the curé sharply, "you and he have nothing in common. Taillandy believes—in something: you believe in nothing. He would scorn your agnosticism. In truth, his belief differs from mine very slightly; he is far nearer to me than to you. He sees gods in everything, whereas I see God in everything. The distinction, you observe, is slight."

Monsieur Silvestre puffed out his cheeks in a sigh.

"There," he exclaimed, "you out-talk me as usual! All the more I wish Ferdinand Taillandy were with us, he who can turn phrases as well as you. Have you read his 'Hymn to Diana Imprisoned'?"

"I have," said the curé. "It is admirable. Have you read the Song of Solomon?"

"No," admitted Monsieur Silvestre.

"It, too, is admirable."

"Where can I find it?" asked the landlord incautiously.

"In your Bible," said the curé, and drained his glass, well pleased.

"*Touché!*" grunted Monsieur Silvestre. "It is I who pay for the beers."

Presently, when the sun had swung up high above the square, the curé perceived Madame Nicolas coming from her shop beside the church. The landlord, too, marked her in the distance, for the streets of the village of Evremont were never so crowded but that one could distinguish Madame Nicolas. Nor was any one in Evremont ever too busy or too hurried to greet her.

She was a serene, motherly woman, now past middle age, who, with her daughters Diane and Véronique, kept the little shop where good Catholics purchased the consoling symbols of their faith. But always Madame Nicolas gave something more priceless than anything she sold. As the curé put it: "When you buy a rosary from Madame Nicolas you obtain a great deal more than a rosary—you obtain a glimpse of peace on earth; and you depart convinced that God is good."

Even Monsieur Silvestre, professed agnostic, fairly worshipped Madame Nicolas.

"There," he said, "there is the morning sunlight."

She crossed the square, careful not to disturb the sparrows drinking and fidgeting at the watering-trough, and approached the Café du Levant.

"Good morning," she greeted them. "I come to inform Monsieur le curé that I have finished mending the altar-cloth. Diane and Véronique and I worked until late last night. Diane and Véronique have done beautifully—but I—my fingers are a little old and my eyes a little dim. My portion of it might be better."

The curé hastened to assure her that he had no anxiety as to the quality of her work. He knew it of old. Then said Monsieur Silvestre: "We were talking but now of Ferdinand Taillandy. Have you news of him, Madame Nicolas?"

She shook her head gravely.

"No," said she, "we have heard or seen nothing of him since—since he found my Diane and brought her back to me from the city. It is impossible now to thank him for what he did, but I pray for him. He is a good man."

"He is not of the church," Monsieur Silvestre could not forbear saying.

"No," she agreed quietly, "nor, for a long time, was Saint Paul."

"I perceive," responded Monsieur Silvestre with a shrug, "that you Christians claim us all. If you count Taillandy and me among you, it would appear that your religion is tolerant."

"Belief," said the curé, "is always tolerant. It is only unbelief that is bigoted. The dogma of the agnostic is very strict—perhaps because he fears that any day a little ray of faith will come to disturb him."

"You talk me to death," remarked the landlord, "and I have work to do. I will bid you good-by." And he retreated sulkily to the shelter of his desk within the walls.

They smiled at his discomfiture, for they knew his moods and loved him for them and in spite of them.

Then said Madame Nicolas: "Monsieur le curé, may I talk to you for a while—about Diane?"

The curé drew a chair for her beside him.

"You may talk to me, Madame Nicolas, about anything."

For a space she remained silent, searching doubtless a method of beginning. Her hands were unquiet and there was a hint of trouble clouding her kind gray eyes.

"You know Félix—Félix Romarin?" she asked at length.

"Yes," answered the curé, "I know him certainly—and then?"

"Do you think well of him?"

"Ah, now, Madame Nicolas, what shall I say? Yes, I think well of him. Also I am sorry for him. He has a devil within him that may some day send him headlong down a steep place into the sea. But we are trying to cast out that devil—Félix and I—and I have the hope that with God's help we shall succeed. Félix is of the south—his family come from Cagnes—and in the south men strike before they think or before they speak. They wound

with their hands rather than with their tongues. I am not sure that on that account they are more blameworthy in the eyes of the Lord, but certainly they are more blameworthy in the eyes of the law. The magistrate has seen Félix on several occasions. Thus far he has been lenient; next time perhaps—but what has Félix done now?"

"He has fallen in love with Diane," answered Madame Nicolas simply.

The curé whistled softly and perplexedly.

"I understand," he said — "I understand. Or, rather, I do not understand."

"He desires to marry her at once," said Madame Nicolas.

"Yes, yes—and she?"

"What would you? She does not love him—she likes him well enough perhaps. She asks me. It is difficult."

"Indeed, yes, it is difficult," pondered the curé. "It is an opportunity, of course, and not a bad one. Félix, as I said, is not bad at heart—impulsive only. And Diane—ah, Madame Nicolas, it is a sad truth that when a young girl has sinned there are few sinners who will forgive her."

"I know," said Madame Nicolas wistfully, "I know."

There was a silence.

"I think—" began the curé, and stopped. Then—"Let us wait awhile, Madame Nicolas," he said. "Let us wait and see how much

in earnest Félix is. And perhaps—who knows?—Diane will come to love him at least a little. Then, in that case, let her marry, Madame Nicolas, and—ah, well, let her marry and bear children who will resemble their grandmother.”

But Madame Nicolas, with the merest trace of a smile in return for the compliment, shook her head.

“I wish I might believe that they could marry and be happy,” she said, “but I know my Diane. She will not marry Félix because she loves another.”

“And the other, I suppose, does not love her. Always it is like that with a woman. Your Diane, Madame Nicolas, is, I fear, annoyingly feminine.”

“What would you wish? Can even a man control his heart?”

The curé glanced away rather hastily. He had once been two-and-twenty.

“No,” he said, “you are right. A man can but smother his heart.”

“And still be happy?” persisted Madame Nicolas.

He sighed and smiled.

“And eventually be not unhappy,” he answered. “But we are becoming too abstract, and I am certain you did not come to me to discuss generalities. Tell me, if you wish, who is this other man whom Diane loves and who is senseless enough not to love her.”

"It is Ferdinand Taillandy," said Madame Nicolas.

"Ah," said the curé; and then he added: "Of course."

"Why do you say that?" she asked.

"Why? Because that man is in every one's mind. He has become an obsession with all of us. Monsieur Silvestre and I were but just now quarrelling over him——"

"That proves nothing," interjected Madame Nicolas with a smile, "you and Monsieur Silvestre would quarrel about a sparrow."

"You have said it," agreed the curé; "but nevertheless Ferdinand Taillandy seems to be of greater importance than a sparrow. Certainly his flights are longer."

He stopped and leaned forward in his chair, shading his eyes from the sun. Madame Nicolas, following his gaze, saw in the distance, far down the road that bordered the river, a gray figure of a man walking briskly toward them. There was a bulky something strapped to his back, and in his hand he swung a stick. Occasionally he skipped a little, as if rejoicing in the beauty and freshness of the day, and occasionally he made wonderful passes and lunges with the stick into the empty air.

"He is gay, that one there," observed Madame Nicolas.

The curé did not answer, nor did he remove his eyes from the figure.

"He skips like a lamb," continued Madame Nicolas.

"Do you forget," said the curé, "that it is spring?" And still he did not look away.

The stranger drew rapidly nearer. A stray breath of the breeze bore to them a fragment of song from his lips.

"He sings, too," said Madame Nicolas. "I wonder is he of the circus."

The curé vouchsafed no reply, but he got up from his chair that he might see the better.

"*Tiens*," he murmured to himself, "*c'est bien drôle!*"

"Why," demanded Madame Nicolas, "do you so excite yourself? It is not the first time a stranger has come to Evremont."

Suddenly the curé broke into loud laughter and sat down. He slapped the table with his hand until the glasses trembled and threatened to fall. Madame Nicolas regarded him in amazement. Down the road the stranger was singing lustily now. They could hear the words:

*"L'Amour est enfant de bohême,
Qui n'a jamais connu des lois."*

The curé could not cease his laughter.

"What have you?" demanded Madame Nicolas, distressed.

"Where are your eyes?" retorted the curé. "I fear, Madame Nicolas, that you are near-sighted."

"I am," said she, "but what harm? Is it any one I know?"

The curé's response was indirect.

"Monsieur Silvestre!" he called—and again: "Monsieur Silvestre! Three tall beers—and cold ones! Monsieur Ferdinand Taillandy, if I am not mistaken, will be thirsty!"

II

TAILLANDY, as the curé had foreseen, made direct for the Café du Levant. He had walked far that morning—indeed he walked far every day, and had for nearly nine years—and he knew by experience that Monsieur Silvestre's beer was good. Moreover, as a young man in his early twenties, he had known the landlord and the curé and Madame Nicolas, and he had teased Véronique and Diane when they were children and had pigtails to pull. So he approached the Café du Levant with an eager step, anticipating both beer and benedictions.

Monsieur Silvestre, the curé, and Madame Nicolas arose to make him welcome. They vied, one with the other, in cordiality, for Monsieur Silvestre admired his mind, the curé coveted his soul, and Madame Nicolas—ah, Madame Nicolas had given him her heart ever since he had found Diane and brought her back from Paris one cold November dawn.

"Monsieur Ferdinand," said she, "you left

so quickly that morning that I could not thank you for what you had done. And now I see you again after these months and, behold, I find no words."

"Madame Nicolas," answered the poet, "you need no words. I received your thanks when I saw the light come into your eyes on that morning. I am a pagan, but a pagan can be proud to have been of service to such a Christian as you. I am your very humble servant, Madame Nicolas," and he bent very gallantly to kiss her hand.

"So," remarked the landlord eagerly, "you are still a pagan? You still believe in all those gods?"

Taillandy raised his eyebrows in surprise. Then he leaned back in his chair, stretched himself in the sunlight, flicked an ash from his cigarette with a nicotine-stained finger, and smiled—an amused, crooked smile—under his gay mustache.

"But yes," he said, "but yes. Naturally, I believe in the true gods. Why should I not? They are everywhere about me. One has but to open one's eyes to see them."

"Are they in that beer?" queried Monsieur Silvestre maliciously.

Taillandy shrugged his shoulders, a little vexed. "No," said he gravely. "I see nothing in the beer but a dead fly."

"Bravo!" applauded the curé.

"Thank you," said Taillandy. "Does he

trouble you, too, Monsieur le curé, with his scepticism?"

"Oh, no; I fear that it is I who trouble him with my belief. He tries to convert us all to his agnosticism—I believe that is the name he calls it by. It is a handsome word and sounds intellectual. But all it means, I am told, is: 'I don't know.' Well, that is Monsieur Silvestre. Always he does not know."

Madame Nicolas shook her head, smiling. "Monsieur Silvestre is a fraud," she said. "He is a lamb in wolf's clothing. It is I who have seen him often enough without his disguise, and he has the largest heart in Evremont-sur-Seine. Diane says that when no one is looking he is always doing some good deed and blushing with shame. Several mornings, when he thought no one was about, she saw him scattering crumbs for the sparrows out there by the watering-trough."

"They become hungry in the winter," said Monsieur Silvestre gruffly. "I can't have them dying in front of my café."

"And," continued Madame Nicolas, "he bought the crutches and the invalid's chair for little Baptiste, that poor lame boy."

"I give up," said Monsieur Silvestre. "You see good in everything and everybody. You would doubtless see something to praise in the devil himself."

"Why not?" interposed the curé. "His perseverance surely is commendable."

"We talk too much," asserted the landlord. "Let us give Monsieur Taillandy's ears a rest. He should have much of interest to tell us. From where do you come, Monsieur Ferdinand? I am told you have walked all over the map of Europe in the last nine years."

"Austria—the Tyrol—northern Italy. High up for the most part. As near as possible to the stars. Next to the sea I love a mountain. The sea soothes me, but a mountain exalts me. It is like solemn music. Then, too, I am fond of pine-trees—straight, tall, clean pine-trees, such as grow on heights. Have you ever seen a winter moon shining through a forest of pines, their shadows black on the snow?"

"Are you never lonely?" asked Madame Nicolas a little wistfully.

He glanced at her quickly, as if she had correctly read some secret thought of his which he was loath to admit even to himself.

Then he said: "There are always dryads for company."

"There are what?" demanded Monsieur Silvestre.

"No matter—you would not understand. You will never see them. There are scores of them hiding in those poplars down there by the river, but, alas, Monsieur Silvestre, you will never see them. . . . And now," he added after a silence, "and now that I have finished my beer I am going to ask Madame Nicolas to grant me a favor. I am going to ask her to

take me across to her shop and let me see its treasures."

"But certainly," cried she. "Only I fear there are no treasures."

"There is one that is priceless," he said; "there is Diane."

III

MADAME NICOLAS'S shop was in immaculate order, for she and her two daughters would have considered it akin to sacrilege that dust should lie on the pictures and statuettes of the saints, or that there should not be a fitting and comfortable place for each wreath and rosary. The place had the air of repose that one associates more with a museum or a chapel than with a store where articles are bought and sold. It was hard to say whether Madame Nicolas's personality endowed it with this serene tranquil atmosphere, or whether Madame Nicolas's serenity and tranquillity were lent her by the shop and its consecrated contents.

"Come in, Monsieur Ferdinand," she said. "Véronique should be in the kitchen, but I will fetch her. As for Diane—here she is at the desk. There will be no measure to her joy."

The meeting of Diane and Taillandy would perhaps have been difficult—a little constrained—had Taillandy not, fortunately, been Taillandy.

"Here, then, after all these months, is my Diane of the Moon!" he exclaimed, seizing her two hands. "It is good to see you treading the earth. You have not, I hope, forgotten the mad poet."

Forgotten him, indeed! The reverse was so true that she blushed a little.

"One does not forget the noblest man in the world," she said.

"Ha!" cried he, "now I perceive how easily reputations for nobility are made! I have always wondered why so many merely mediocre fellows are esteemed. Doubtless, in a moment of aberration, they committed some one good deed."

"Is not a poet called great, even if he has written but one great poem?" ventured Diane.

The pagan smiled at her affectionately.

"Not until he is dead, my dear," he assured her. "Then all his bad poems are either forgotten or included in anthologies of verse."

This was, of course, over Diane's head. Indeed, most of his conversation left her dazed and bewildered—but always admiring.

He could, I think, have recited to her the alphabet and she would have thought it all very wonderful and the work of an inspired genius. But she was spared the necessity of a reply by the entrance of Madame Nicolas and Véronique—the latter glowing (not at all unattractively) from the kitchen.

"Monsieur Ferdinand," said Madame Nico-

las, "do you remember my daughter Véronique?"

Taillandy bowed low.

"I do," said he, "very distinctly. She had bare legs when I knew her and used to like to be kissed."

The girl smiled gravely at him. Then she blushed, glanced at her mother, and said: "I wear stockings now, but otherwise I doubt if I have changed."

"Good!" cried the poet, and embraced her on both cheeks. Then he stood off and surveyed the three of them, evidently with approbation.

"The mother of the Gracchi!" said he. "You are Cornelia and those are your jewels. You are greatly to be envied, Madame Nicolas."

His enthusiasm pleased and confused them. But it was enthusiasm well-founded. Diane he had known to be lovely, for he had seen her within the year; but Véronique he had not seen for many years. She was slightly older than her sister, slightly calmer, slightly more poised. She was tall and dark, with smooth hair framing a narrow, oval face. In her brown eyes lay something of the calm and the confidence that was her mother's—the calm and the confidence earned by suffering borne and ended. More reticent perhaps than Diane, she was more of a riddle to solve. You felt never quite sure that Véronique would say or do; you felt always sure that Diane would obey her im-

pulses, and in time you could learn the nature of these. Taillandy had learned their nature and, learning that, had learned her charm. She was the second woman in his life to alter his life: the first one had driven him disconsolate into exile; the thought of the second, just when his solitary nomad's existence had become sweet to him, caused that existence to seem aimless, sterile, intolerable. Man was not made to live alone. And so it came to pass that the wanderer returned to Evremont-sur-Seine, where he had every reason to expect he should find Diane and solace.

Madame Nicolas broke in on his meditations by extending an invitation to luncheon. Everything, he reflected, was being made easy for him. They were receiving him open-armed. And then he heard Diane say, a little irritably: "Félix Romarin will be here also. Had you forgotten, mother?"

It was obvious that Madame Nicolas had forgotten—she might well have forgotten more important things than that in her enthusiasm at this unlooked-for opportunity to display her gratitude. She experienced a brief moment of discomfiture—a moment not so brief, however, but that Taillandy marked it and said: "Perhaps another day, Madame Nicolas. My stay at Evremont is indefinite."

She protested earnestly and sincerely, vowing that there was plenty to eat for all. "But," said Taillandy to himself, "it was not, I am

sure, the question of food that embarrassed her. It was this Félix, whoever he may be." And he was not wrong.

In the interval before the arrival of Félix the pagan noted that Véronique was the only one to appear quite herself—the only one who did not fidget uneasily or glance at the clock. Diane seemed moody—now drait, now very talkative and vivacious; and, as for Madame Nicolas, she was as distressed as a woman of her innate serenity and self-control could be.

"A little drama, perhaps," mused Taillandy, always observant. "One man too many at the table. I had almost forgotten how complex civilized existence is. Well, when this Félix arrives we shall see what we shall see."

When Félix arrived Taillandy saw a dark-skinned, dark-eyed youth with a shock of black hair that curled evidently in spite of the brush—a youth of quick, abrupt gestures and speech, a youth of twenty-three, perhaps, with a mouth that could smile radiantly or could turn sullen at a word. He saw a lithe, active youth, supple as a cat, graceful as a cat, and, thought Taillandy, treacherous, perhaps, as a cat.

The two men mistrusted each other, I think, from the very first; but once again it was Taillandy who was able to ease the strain.

"You come from the south, monsieur?" he inquired courteously, "unless I misjudge your accent."

"Yes—from Cagnes."

"Ah, true? I know it well. It bathes its feet in the sea—and what a sea! Picture to yourself, Madame Nicolas, a blue sea that sparkles like the eyes of Aphrodite, that is edged with foam as white as her white arms—a sea whose laughter among the rocks is like the glad laughter of nereids. Cagnes, I tell you, bathes her feet in that sea, and——"

"And," interrupted Félix, "Cagnes is truly blessed in its foot-tub."

Taillandy, annoyed at the interruption, frowned a little; then, thinking better of it, smiled and bowed.

"It is as you say, monsieur—Cagnes is blessed in its foot-tub."

IV

It was not a particularly successful luncheon. Taillandy did his best, which meant that he talked a great deal, and Félix, resenting the ease with which the poet conversed on unintelligible subjects, grew silent almost to the point of being openly impolite. Moreover, Diane ignored Félix, ignored him wholly to the point of being impolite—but I doubt if this was deliberate on her part. One does not, after all, pay much attention to the moon when the sun is high.

Things went no better after the meal, and this was due to the fact that, in the rear of the house, there was a garden—a careful, neat,

well-groomed little garden such as the French bourgeois loves. It was rectangular; it was hemmed in by a low, white wall with red tiles capping it and green vines draping it. At places a sunflower or a hollyhock peered curiously over this wall, that outsiders might be envious and regret that they were outsiders. Two straight paths traversed the garden at right angles and divided it into four parts, and a plaster Cupid, aiming an arrow into the air, marked triumphantly their intersection. At the centre of the far end of the garden, and therefore in line with the Cupid, was a stone bench, carved as Madame Nicolas would tell you, by the hands of her dead husband. To this bench, then, came Taillandy and Diane, while Félix sulked indoors.

"We will talk," observed the pagan simply, as he took his seat beside her. "Or rather, you shall talk, and for once I will listen. . . . This Félix? He loves you?"

"Oh, monsieur!" remonstrated Diane.

Taillandy nodded.

"Precisely—he loves you. But, name of a name, naturally he loves you! The one question of interest is—do you love him? Answer me that, my little Diane—and answer truly."

He looked her seriously and fixedly in the eyes, and there was no trace of a smile at his lips but, rather, his high eyebrows were knit in a frown of doubt and of anxiety. It seemed he placed great weight on her reply.

She, a little frightened by his intenseness, hesitated, blushed, looked at him and then away, opened her lips as if to speak but, instead, put her face in her hands and sobbed. . . . Ah, woman, where is thy mystery!

Of course he should have taken her in his arms to comfort her; but Taillandy, who understood many things divine, understood not human woman—and, more especially, human woman in tears.

“I am sorry,” he said contritely. “I have given you pain—I have asked too much. Will you forgive me?”

She did not reply for a space; but presently she threw back her head, brushed the tears from her eyes with an impatient hand, achieved a smile, and said: “It is nothing; I am foolish; I cry for nothing at all. Always I have been that way. But now, you see, it is past, my foolishness, and I will answer your question. Monsieur Ferdinand, I love a great many things in this world: I love my mother and I love Véronique; I love Monsieur le curé and I love Monsieur Silvestre; I love the Seine—not the Seine of Paris”—she shuddered a little—“but our Seine, the Seine of Evremont, with the poplars, and the meadows, and the cows, and the little boats. I love all these things, Monsieur Ferdinand, and yet—is it not strange?—I do not love Félix.”

“The gods be praised!” murmured Taillandy.

She stole a glance at him, and in that glance was a trace of the Eve that had always been in her.

"And why," she asked demurely, "should the gods be praised?"

"Why?" he echoed, and then again, very triumphantly: "Why? Why, because, my Diane of the Moon, the gods have planned a different destiny for you, and it is not good that the gods be thwarted."

He raised his long arms as if calling all Olympus to witness; and as he did so he saw Félix Romarin coming down the path from the house.

V

PERHAPS Félix thought that he had sulked long enough in his tent. After all, sulking is ineffective and therefore unsatisfying unless the act is attracting attention—causing pain, for example, or anxiety, or even pity. To sulk unheeded is sheer waste of time and energy.

Now, Madame Nicolas and Véronique had talked pleasantly and comfortably across Félix's most obstinate silence. In vain had he endeavored to emphasize the facts that his feelings were hurt, that he took no interest in their conversation, that he considered himself ill used. They remained persistently cheerful, and as soon as they perceived that he ignored their questions they forbore to question him.

Finally, in a rage, he picked up his hat and left the room for the garden, where he well knew he was not wanted.

"I fear there will be trouble," said Madame Nicolas anxiously.

"He has a quick temper," said Véronique.

"But at bottom a good heart," added Madame Nicolas.

"It is far at the bottom to-day," concluded Véronique, and snapped the silk thread of her embroidery viciously. . . .

When Félix reached the bench at the end of the garden he stood silent before Diane and Taillandy, his arms folded, his head down, watching them from under sullen brows. He did not know what he wished to say—what he had come to say—so he said the most unfortunate thing possible.

"Have you talked enough with your lover from Paris?"

There was a silence. Taillandy's arms dropped slowly to his sides and, as slowly, he got up from his seat.

"Go back to the shop, Diane," he said quietly. "I will talk with this Romarin a little."

"No—no!" she cried, clutching at his hand. "You must not stay alone with him—you do not know Félix. He is mad—he sees red—and when he is that way he will do anything."

"So I perceive," answered the pagan, and the crooked smile came to his lips, but mirthlessly.

"No," continued Diane, "it is I who will talk a little with this Romarin. And when I finish I shall talk with him no more. Félix, listen well. It is of the utmost seriousness—what I have to say."

Félix clenched his fists, but his eyes sought the ground and he flushed darkly—perhaps from anger, perhaps from shame.

"Let me deal with him alone," he said. "He is a man and I am a man. It is easier that way. I can do nothing with you—you know that. You are a woman—you are my woman—the woman I love. That also you know. I cannot talk to women. Let me, I say, deal with *him*."

"I am the woman you love—I?" cried Diane. "When you love a woman, then, do you insult her?"

"If the woman I love hurts me," said Félix, "I strive to hurt her."

"And if—" interposed Taillandy, "and if the man you hate hurts you, what do you do?"

There was a brief silence. Then—"I strive to kill him," answered Romarin.

"In that case," argued Taillandy, "since I seem to be the offender, why do you not kill me at once? With what weapon are you accustomed to commit murder?—the knife?—the revolver?—or, perhaps, the slow poison? Come, my friend, you are rather absurd. You seek doubtless to frighten me, but, you perceive, it is not I that am afraid to die—it is you that are afraid to kill. And that is quite

as it should be, for no pagan hesitates to die, whereas all Christians hesitate to kill. This repugnance of bloodshed is, if I may point it out to you, a weakness derived mainly from Christianity and from our modern and unnatural state of civilization. You are told, I believe, to love your enemies; but do you not see how impossible that is? A man can love some one who has been his enemy, or some one who may eventually become his enemy, but the instant a man loves his enemy, why, then he is simply loving his friend—and we are all of us quite capable of doing that. In fact, it would be just as unnatural for a man to hate his friend as it would be for a man to love his enemy—just as unnatural and just as impossible. But perhaps you will ask—is not hatred unbeautiful, and therefore something to be shunned? The answer is simple: there are beautiful hatreds and unbeautiful hatreds, just as there are beautiful loves and unbeautiful loves. Is the hatred of tyranny more ugly than the love of tyranny; or, if you will be more concrete, is the man who hates a tyrant more blameworthy than the man who loves a tyrant? . . . But perhaps I bore you. It is a subject on which I am inclined to become discursive. Always, always, I talk too much. Is it not so, Diane?"

He turned to smile at her, and this time there was mirth in his smile. And then he did a strange thing—strange because it was successful: he took each of them by an arm and led

them calmly up the path to the shop. And, to keep up their spirits on the way, he recited to them an ode from Horace, which, of course, neither of them understood in the least. Félix went unprotesting. I think that, for the moment, Taillandy's rhetoric had him cowed.

VI

TAILLANDY made his home at Evremont in an up-stairs room of the Café du Levant. Monsiur Silvestre, needless to say, was delighted to have such an illustrious comrade, and Monsieur le curé visited the café even more frequently than before. That Taillandy loved to talk there is no denying; but also there is no denying that this audience of two loved to listen to him. At the little table on the sidewalk he arranged the affairs of earth and of heaven: he upset ministries, he dethroned kings; he pom-melled civilization, and annihilated all creeds but his own. Often, to be sure, he contradicted himself, but that is the way of all fluent and eloquent men. At the end of three days he had the world so transfigured that all was right with it—a prodigious feat, you must admit, to perform at a café-table.

But he did not neglect Diane. At Evremont-sur-Seine one rises early, and Taillandy, trained by his years of solitary wandering to rise by the

sun rather than by the clock, adapted himself readily to the custom. And so it came about that his hours with Diane were the twilight hours of dawn and sunset—those miraculous hours when our senses are the most acute, when we are gladdest or saddest, when we love life the most or fear death the least.

As for Félix Romarin, for the time being he was out of the picture. If any one worried about him it was the curé, who was aware that he had given up his employment and had been drinking more than was good for him. Félix never troubled the Café du Levant (for reasons known doubtless to Monsieur Silvestre), but twice during the week he had been forcibly ejected from that more plebeian resort known as the Café de la Victoire; and this was ominous, inasmuch as the management of the Café of Victory was notoriously lenient.

One day, at noon, Taillandy met Félix crossing the square.

"Good morning," said the poet; "it is a handsome day."

Félix stopped short and regarded him, swaying slightly where he stood.

"Some may think so," he replied ungraciously.

"Which implies, I presume, that some do not?"

Félix shrugged his shoulders and steadied himself with a hand on the watering-trough.

"Every one has his turn," said he. "For the

moment you are up and I am down. But that may change—who knows?"

"Yes, indeed," agreed the poet; "who knows?"

Romarin stared at him.

"I know," he said briefly, and passed on. . . .

Now, in June the days are long, and Evremont, dining early, finishes its cognac and coffee before sunset. Taillandy and Monsieur Silvestre were accustomed to take their evening meal together on the sidewalk when the weather was fine, and to linger over it, cracking nuts and nibbling raisins, until the curé should join them for the coffee. On a certain evening (it was the second Sunday, I believe, after Taillandy's arrival at Evremont) the curé was woefully late in appearing.

"I wonder what it is that holds him?" mused the poet.

"It would perhaps be that old housekeeper of his—that Amélie. She treats him like a child and does not like him to go out in the evenings. If she had her way Monsieur le curé would be between the sheets at half past seven every night. That is solicitude carried to excess. Sometimes it makes me glad that there is no one to care for me to such an extent."

Taillandy nodded slowly.

"Yes," he answered, "we men want to be nursed only when we want to be nursed. But when we want nursing and there is no one to do

it—ah, then, my friend, then how sorry do we feel for ourselves!”

“I take it,” observed the landlord slyly, “that you contemplate engaging a nurse.”

“You have wonderful vision,” returned Taillandy, and was about to change the subject when the hurried arrival of the curé saved him the trouble.

Monsieur le curé was panting and distressed.

“You are late,” said the landlord, “and you are out of breath. Have you been wrestling with your conscience—or running away from it, perhaps?”

“Neither,” replied the curé, briefly; “I have been searching for Félix Romarin. He has been missing since noon, and he has been drunk since last night. It is bad. I have inquired for him at every house in Evremont.”

“Why look for something no one wishes to find?” demanded Monsieur Silvestre. “We are well quit of him.”

“Hush,” commanded the curé. “Do you not know——”

“Oh,” the landlord interrupted airily, “I know. You will tell me about the sparrow that falls and how the very hairs of my head are numbered.”

“Not at all. I was about to ask you if you did not know that he had procured for himself a revolver.”

“Ah,” observed Taillandy, “that becomes

interesting. And what does he think to do with a revolver?"

The curé hesitated.

"It is as well to warn you," he said at length. "They who saw him last tell me that he left the Café de la Victoire very drunk at noon with his revolver, and that he said he was going hunting—for big game!"

Taillandy raised his eyebrows, sipped his cognac, replaced the glass on the table, and lit a cigarette.

"Big game," he mused. "That would be me—not? Well, he has been very slow to find his big game—and very blind. I flatter myself I have been much in evidence since noon."

"Then," said the curé, "I beg of you to be less in evidence this evening. I am serious, my friend."

"I hope so," replied Taillandy enigmatically; "I hope so. And I, also, am serious. But I shall not change my habits merely because Monsieur Romarin chooses to become drunk; and to prove that I shall not I now bid you all good-evening. As for the hunter of big game—well, you remember that Actæon and Adonis were huntsmen who found game bigger than they expected—with fatal consequences to them both. *Messieurs, bonsoir.*"

He picked up his battered hat, thrust it carelessly and rakishly on his head, tossed a two-franc piece on the table, and departed. They

watched him cross the twilit square in the direction of the shop of Madame Nicolas.

"He goes to walk with Diane?" said the curé, interrogatively.

"But yes," responded Monsieur Silvestre. "It is their custom at this hour." And then he added with a sigh: "It is the lovers' hour. I remember . . ."

"Naturally," interrupted the curé, "we all remember."

They fell silent, each perhaps remembering.

Inside, in the café, a waiter commenced to light the lamps, for it was growing dark; and presently about the village other lights glowed behind square windows. Below them, as the sun slipped down behind the hills, the Seine changed from gold to silver. Then a star or two stepped into the sky and it was night.

"I am uneasy," said the curé, shivering a little.

"For him?" asked Monsieur Silvestre.

"Yes; for him. . . . Listen! Did you hear nothing?"

"I hear only the tinkle of the water in the trough out there, and the splashing of the sparrows."

"Nothing more?"

"The wind in the poplars."

"It is well. I imagine things. I am overwrought."

"You had better sleep," advised Monsieur

Silvestre. "I will walk home with you across the square."

"No, not yet awhile, my friend. I should not sleep. It is better that I stay here with you for a time, if you will bear with me."

"As you will. For me, I ask nothing better. Will you drink?"

"No, but I will smoke. It will quiet me. . . ."

VII

TAILLANDY found Diane waiting for him in the doorway of the shop. She was in white, with a hooded cloak over her shoulders. Her face was pale even in the glow of the dying sun, but there was gold in the shadows of her hair.

"I am late," said the pagan; "the curé detained me."

"Is there anything wrong?" she inquired.

He hesitated; then—"No, nothing," he replied. "Are we not together?"

They followed the crooked street that led to the river—a street that soon became a mere wagon trail across the meadows. They walked close together, and presently he put his arm about her and kissed her, with only the first stars to witness it.

"In that," he said gravely, "are all my vows. The earth and the sky are my altar, and I

pledge myself to you before them. To-morrow—or when you will—for your sake and for the sake of our good friend the curé, I will stand before your altar and his to renew this pledge. Are you content, my Diane?"

"You are good," she answered, "and I am very happy."

"And you love me?"

She smiled at him quietly, wistfully, yearningly, as a woman smiles when she knows that all her words are inadequate.

"You know I do," she said.

"Forever?"

"Forever — ever and forever," she repeated. . . .

They came to the margin of the river, and he found her a spot beside a willow where they could see the stars. At their feet the Seine murmured and whispered, flowing silver to Paris and the sea. About them hung the perfume of spring.

For a long time they talked quietly — they knew not how long, whether it was a thousand ages or an evening. Then, suddenly, the poet stopped short in the middle of a sentence.

"What was that?" he asked.

They listened intently.

"It is some one walking by the river," she said, after a space.

Again they listened. They heard footsteps coming along the path that bordered the Seine — unsteady footsteps. Perhaps because of the

darkness. They heard a crackling of underbrush and an oath. Diane gave a little cry. Taillandy stood up, long and lean and silent. She also stood up, but, holding her hand, he put her gently behind him.

Out of the shadows by the path and into a patch of starlight came a grotesque black figure, lurching, stumbling, shaking his fists at the stars. When he was within twenty yards of them he stopped, his eye arrested by the splash of white that was Diane's dress. He straightened himself with an effort and regarded them for long, silent minutes. Then, slowly and with caution, he advanced.

"What do you want?" demanded Taillandy sharply.

"That which I have found," was the answer. "I am in luck. It is Diane and her lover. Tonight, Monsieur Taillandy, I am up and you are down. Do you not remember that I warned you?"

"You had better go home and get to bed," advised the poet.

Félix laughed unpleasantly.

"It is you who are going home," he answered, "and your bed will be deep."

He made a quick motion with his right arm; there was a sharp report of a revolver—not overloud; there was a little cloud of smoke swaying in front of Romarin's face; there was the bitter smell of powder poisoning the air. . . .

Diane caught Taillandy in her arms, staggered under the weight of him, and then fell with him to the ground.

VIII

"HUSH!" cried the curé. "What was that?"

"A shot," answered Monsieur Silvestre, "down by the river. Come! Can you run?"

But the curé was half-way across the square. Monsieur Silvestre, more corpulent, panted after him.

When they reached the river they heard Diane's voice calling for help. The curé, who still led the race, his skirts flapping about his ankles, turned as he ran and shouted: "Faster, my friend! Diane does not cry for nothing."

"Name of God," answered the landlord, "is it not I who know it?" and he redoubled his efforts with such effect that he drew abreast of the priest.

Together, then, they came upon the little group beside the willows. Taillandy lay motionless on the ground, his long limbs relaxed, his head pillowed on Diane's breast. Félix stood over them with arms folded across his chest and the revolver still in his right hand. He said nothing, but swayed slightly from side to side, shifting from one foot to the other.

When Diane recognized the curé she said: "*Mon père*, tell me that he yet lives."

The curé knelt beside her and laid his hand on Taillandy's breast, over his heart. The hand came away wet and stained darkly, and the curé shuddered.

"My daughter," he said, "he still lives."

Then he turned to Monsieur Silvestre.

"Take that devil's weapon away from Félix," he commanded, "before he does more harm with it."

At mention of his name Félix spoke for the first time.

"I found her with her lover," he whimpered — "I found her with her lover, and so I killed him."

Monsieur Silvestre, growling with fury, leaped on him. He wrested the revolver from his fingers and struck him across the mouth with his open hand.

"That is enough from you!" he cried.

But Félix, impassive under the blow, merely repeated: "I found her with her lover, and so I killed him."

"Come," said the curé, "pay no more heed for the present, Monsieur Silvestre. We must get Ferdinand back to the village."

They were about to lift him, the curé at his head, the landlord at his feet, when Taillandy opened his eyes and motioned them to desist.

"I know," he said, with an attempt at his twisted smile, "I know. You are very good. But let me lie here for a while. It will not be long, and here I have everything and every

one about me that I love. . . . Even that poor Félix, whom I do not hate."

"We will attend to him," promised Monsieur Silvestre.

"Attend, rather, to the absinthe," said the pagan vaguely, "and to the hot blood of the south." With that he seemed to dismiss the matter from his mind, and, turning his face to Diane, he said: "Kiss me well, my little Diane, my Moon-Goddess, my slim Huntress—kiss me well. Give me strength from your lips to climb Olympus alone. You remember, I told you it was a hard climb—a hard climb even when two go together."

She bent her head to kiss him. Monsieur Silvestre turned away, sobbing and groaning: "Now where is your God of pity!" he cried; "where is your God of love! Show me now a miracle and I will believe!" The curé still knelt quietly by the poet's side; Félix stood above them, motionless, dazed.

"My love," whispered Diane, "if you want me with you to climb the mountain I am ready. And I am eager to start. Félix should have another bullet——"

"Hush," he interrupted her. "You will come when the gods will it. And I, going ahead, will leave signs by the roadside to guide you. It is better so. . . . Listen! Do you not hear the naiads singing in the river—or is it the stars, perhaps, that sing? Surely I hear it. It grows louder—there is in my ears a great

surge of song — and a clashing of cymbals. Take my hand, Diane. . . . Look, Monsieur le curé is praying for me—praying to *his* God. That is kind of him, Diane. May your God bless you, Monsieur le curé! You and I—we are both right, for Something put all those stars in the heavens. Is it not true?"

The curé's eyes glowed with happiness as he answered: "The God of gods and the Light of light—what matters the name?" And he made the sign of the cross on Taillandy's forehead and breast.

The poet smiled weakly.

"What matters the name," he repeated, "so long as the name be Love?"

He closed his eyes, the smile still at his lips. And, with the smile still at his lips, he went out, alone, to his wandering.



TROPIC MADNESS



TROPIC MADNESS

I

THAT Andrew Farley took himself very seriously at the age of twenty-six could not be blamed on his liberal education at Harvard or on his four years' postgraduate experience in a broker's office in Wall Street; for neither Harvard nor Wall Street, estimable institutions though they be, tend to encourage over introspection. Indeed, Andrew had been surrounded ever since he could remember by cheerfully idiotic friends who cultivated their muscles at the expense of their minds, and who scornfully ignored their souls. But Andrew was very much interested in his soul, and, to do him justice, in other people's souls. Psychology, in the strictest sense of the word, was to him a study of never-ceasing importance and fascination: he specialized in it at Harvard and he tried, with little success, to pursue it in Wall Street. Actions and their motives, reactions and their connotations, life and its vast, complex meaning, the ideal relation of the sexes and how it should be brought about, man's duty to the world and the world's duty to man—all these were things the pondering of which occupied Andrew Far-

ley's mind at the expense of intercollegiate athletics and the vagaries of the stock-market.

Accordingly, every one was surprised when Andrew's engagement to Marcella Maynard was announced, and no one was surprised when Andrew's engagement to Marcella Maynard was broken. Marcella, you see, was very superficial—at least, people who were very superficial said so—and Andrew was known to be very fundamental. Marcella had never read Darwin or Huxley or Ruskin or Bergson, with all of whom Andrew was thoroughly conversant and about whom—why deny it?—he was perhaps too thoroughly conversational. Then, too, Marcella “went out a great deal in society,” and Andrew had long ago convinced himself that society, so called, tended to dwarf the soul and was, therefore, beneath contempt. With fine scorn and finer alliteration he had denounced society's polite conversation as the “vapid vaporings of illiterate imbeciles.” Give him, rather, he protested, the heart-searing discourse of a Polish Jew or the imprisoned fire in the words of an Italian laborer digging in a sewer. True, he understood neither Polish nor Italian, but he thought it unnecessary to mar the effect of his rhetoric by pointing out this deficiency.

Marcella—I knew her well—was a delightful girl in spite of her fondness for superficial pleasures. She was essentially feminine. I always admired her because she played such a

ludicrously bad game of tennis and was completely at a loss on a golf-links. There are a hundred things I could say in her favor that Andrew doubtless counted against her, and the greatest of these was that she was scarcely educated—that is, she spelled abominably and misused all words of more than three syllables and many of less. In addition to this she was passionately fond of jewelry and clothes and flowers and candy, all of which Andrew classed with the pomps and vanities of this wicked world. So you see there was no possible chance of their hitting it off together so long as Andrew remained Andrew and Marcella remained Marcella.

Andrew showed me, years afterward, the note that she wrote to him, breaking the engagement.

“Dear Andrew,”—she began, very primly—“after our conversation last night I have decided that it will *never* do for us to get married. I am far too frivolous I’m afraid—and I can’t *bear* to give up all those lovely things that you object to so much—and I just *won’t* take a course of reading or go to stuffy lectures at Barnard. I know as much as any girl I know and woman’s sphere is *not* in the library but in the *home* after all isn’t it!! Of course I *admire* you very much and all that but I can’t keep up pretending to be serious like you all my life. I like to laugh at things and I think

it's better to laugh than to cry always. If you want what you call a companion that is your equal in mentality I won't do because I am no Socrates or whatever that old Roman's name was—and I will *never* be one. So Andrew I'm afraid it is all over between us. I'm very sorry but it is better to have found out in time—isn't it!! Better for *both* of us I mean. I will always think very kindly of you and am returning your gifts except the candy which is eaten. With best wishes for your future, I remain,

“Yours very truly,

“MARCELLA MAYNARD.”

The receipt of that letter put Andrew into a state of mind that interested him exceedingly. He discovered that he was not at all heart-broken—if anything had been hurt it was, perhaps, his pride. The letter was so calm, so casual—as if the girl herself were not heart-broken either. It annoyed him that a person could put him, Andrew Farley, out of her life so ruthlessly, and he reflected that she would have hesitated longer had it been a question of getting rid of her Pekingese. On maturer deliberation this seemed to prove incontestably that she was incapable of appreciating him, incapable of grasping his true worth. Ah, yes, he needed a subtler intellect to mate with his, he needed some one who moved in a rarer, more sublimated atmosphere.

And so, with absolutely no idea of finding

such a person, he packed a trunk and boarded a ship for the West Indies. Marcella went to Palm Beach.

II

IN the West Indies Andrew was offered many opportunities for studying the soul in its primitive state, but, somehow or other, primitive souls seemed to lack a certain vital interest that civilized souls indubitably possessed. Primitive souls provided merely elementary study, and Andrew felt quite rightly that he had passed, so to speak, beyond the First Reader and souls of one syllable. He flattered himself that he thoroughly understood the simpler passions—love, hate, jealousy, avarice—and, in the tropics, life was apparently actuated by nothing more complex than these. Then, to add to his discouragement, he found that he, who had always scoffed at physical attractions, was sensibly repelled by the lack of physical attractions evidenced in the people with whom he came in contact. The West Indian sky was very blue, the Caribbean was crystal-clear and as purple as a colored postal card of it, the palms were very green, but—well, the West Indians were not very white. There were times when he remembered, with a pang, how white Marcella was—how white and how cool. And the scent that she used that suggested lilies of the valley.

He engaged passage on a dingy, reeking little

steamer, and spent three weeks among the Windward Islands. Mid-February found him at Saint Thomas, and at Saint Thomas he had the misfortune to stand on the quay and watch the dingy, reeking little steamer sail out of the harbor without him. He had delayed too long in a shop buying himself a panama.

Now Saint Thomas is a brilliant green island, planted in the middle of a wide expanse of happy blue. It is a warm, lush green—a green that soothes and entices, and insidiously saps one's ambition, like the taste of the lotos or the perfume of the poppy.

Doubtless it was due to this narcotic green, then, that Andrew felt few regrets as he stood on the quay and watched his steamer trail a line of white foam across the harbor. Instead, he found that he was quite content to remain where he was, and not for anything would he have shouted or signalled in an attempt to attract the little vessel's attention to its marooned passenger.

A score of sympathetic natives, black as any spade in the pack, surrounded him, vouchsafing suggestions, and two cabbies repeated continuously in a monotone the phrase: "Keb, sir—want a keb, sir?"

At length, one of them, an old negro in a battered silk hat, approached him and said very politely:

"I tike you drive, m'lord?—tike you nice drive."

Andrew studied him at great leisure.

"Where did you learn your English?" he asked.

"I speak good English," answered the cabby. "I speak English on bloomin' Danish island," and he pointed to the Danish flag flying from the governor's "palace."

The gesture gave Andrew an inspiration.

"Drive me," he said, "to the palace. I will call on the governor."

"Not at 'ome," responded the negro promptly. "He tike vacation—aweye. I tike you see Mr. Jumley."

"Mr. *who?*" inquired Andrew.

"Mr. Jumley. 'E's English. Very rich man, m'lord. Bloomin' big house. Damn fine garden, too. My eye! I tike you see Mr. Jumley, m'lord."

"Very well," answered Andrew, "take me to see Mr. Jumley."

He climbed into the decrepit little barouche and, drawn by a decrepit little horse, they rattled away over the clean cobblestones of the square.

There is but one level road on Saint Thomas—a road that skirts the harbor and the sea. The others clamber inland and skyward, up precipitous slopes, often with the aid of stone steps, and lead to nowhere—for the town and harbor of Charlotte-Amalia is about all there is to Saint Thomas, at least so far as population is concerned.

The driver, fortunately for the health of his horse and the springs of the barouche and the comfort of his passenger, stayed by the shore road, and during the fifteen-minute excursion gave utterance to his thoughts in a never-ceasing monologue.

"Mr. Jumley makes choice rum and other fine sippings," said he. "My eye, that's why 'e's so bloomin' rich man. Wot with tropic, excessive 'eat, and so much dust, we all is excessive thirsty. My eye!"

"I understand," said Andrew.

"Yes, m'lord, *you* understand; but Mr. Jumley, 'e don't understand. Why?—because 'e cawn't. 'E's drunk too much long sippings of 'is own rum—that's wot *I* seye, and 'e's balmy, my eye!"

"How unfortunate!" commented Andrew. "Why, then, do you take me to see a crazy man?"

"Oh, ho!" laughed the driver. "Mr. Jumley likes all new strangers to stay long time with 'im. 'Is 'ouse much better than the bloomin' 'otel. Besides, 'is daughter, Miss Jumley, *she's* not balmy. Oh, no, she's not 'arf balmy. . . . My eye!"

The driver, at this, turned around so that Andrew could see the ecstatic grin on his black face.

"Miss Jumley," he continued, "reads books all daytime and Mr. Jumley he drink rum all night-time. Bloomin' appy family, I calls it."

Andrew, mystified and not a little disgusted, forbore to question the driver further, and presently they drew up in front of an iron gate, beside which, in gilt letters on a marble plaque, was the inscription "Mon Repos." Strange anomaly—an Englishman owning a villa with a French name on a Danish island!

With many misgivings Andrew pushed open the gate and followed the straight path up to the door of a large, square, white-stone, red-roofed house, far more pretentious than any he had hitherto seen in Saint Thomas.

A *café-au-lait* man servant answered his ring at the bell and, without inquiring his business or his name, opened the door wide and stood aside, bowing and grinning, to let him pass.

"Mr. Jumley?" ventured Andrew.

"'E's in bed," answered the man. "But Miss Jumley's in the garden at the back of the 'ouse."

Thereupon he led the way across the stone-paved hall, through a court where a fountain splashed coolly under palms, to a broad terrace that overlooked the sea and that gave access by means of a twisting flight of steps to the garden.

At this point the servant indicated with a brown finger a sort of summer-house, built of green lattice and covered with vines, and he said:

"Miss Jumley always in there with 'er big books."

Then he turned and, leaving Andrew hesitating on the terrace, re-entered the house.

"This," said Andrew to himself, "is very nearly an adventure. The Mystery of the Girl behind the Green Lattice."

He descended the steps and, passing down an alley of palms, reached the summer-house, which was at the extreme end of the garden, separated only by a low parapet from the sea.

In a comfortable-looking wicker chair, with books piled on the ground at her feet and a fat volume of Münsterberg in her hand, sat Miss Jumley.

Much as I should like to, I am afraid that I cannot describe her as beautiful. According to all precedent, of course, a girl that sits in a green lattice summer-house on a tropical island should be very beautiful indeed, and dark, with a skin the color of old ivory. And she should have large, black eyes, like unfathomable wells. But this is a realistic story.

Miss Jumley was tall, angular, and flat—facts which her flowing, tunic-like gown emphasized rather than concealed. Having said that, I have told you the worst, for she had several good points which are strictly compatible with height, angularity, and flatness. Her hands, for instance—long and slim, with sensitive fingers—and her feet, shapely in their sandals. Yes, she wore sandals. Her hair was positively beautiful; that deep reddish-brown hair, the color of russet shoes that have been much pol-

ished, and to Andrew's uninitiated eye it seemed that she had a great deal of this hair. Her skin, while not quite so good as her hair, was welcomely white in contrast to the duskiness that Andrew had encountered during the last month, and her lips, slightly rouged perhaps, emphasized its whiteness. As for her eyes—well, it is hard to describe her eyes. They were not black, nor were they large, unfathomable wells. They were green and rather small, but very intense. She seemed to concentrate the expression of her moods in her eyes, leaving the rest of her face immobile. Later she admitted to Andrew that she had difficulty in keeping her soul out of her eyes—that they spoke when her lips were silent. Andrew thought that charming, and on the few occasions when she was silent he was convinced that her eyes were uttering great thoughts.

At sight of Andrew, standing with his new panama in his hand, she marked her place carefully in her book, put the book aside, and raised slow, inquiring eyes to his.

"Miss Jumley?" he asked.

"Yes," she answered languidly, "I am she. Will you come in and sit down? My name is spelt Cholmondeley, however—if that is of the least interest."

"Ah," said Andrew. "Ah, yes—of course," and found nothing more to add.

"Are you stopping long with us?" she inquired.

Andrew said that he didn't know, that she was very kind to take him in—him, an utter stranger, that he felt very bold and that he would never have intruded on them so brazenly had he not missed his steamer. Then, to sum up, he laid all the blame on the driver who, he said, had insisted on driving him out to the Cholmondeley villa.

She stopped him with a wave of her hand—a graceful gesture that she often employed.

"Don't apologize," she urged. "Apologies are so dull and so useless. My father and I are always glad to entertain any visitor to Charlotte-Amalia. We only regret that we have so few to entertain. It is often lonely here in Saint Thomas. Of course, as for me, I have my books—ah, yes, my good friends the books. I spend hours conversing with Darwin and Voltaire and Goethe and my dear, dear friend Carlyle. But poor father—he lacks that greatest of consolations: the capacity to enjoy the printed word, the indescribable communion of author and reader, the opportunity to visualize a man's soul with never a glimpse of the man's doubtless repellent body."

Andrew's face lighted up with eager interest. Here, surely, was a woman who understood, or who at least craved to understand the great things in life, who was on intimate terms with the great thinkers of world history. Here was a woman, at last, who preferred Carlyle to the fox-trot.

He sat down suddenly on the ground at her feet and commenced respectfully to finger the books that lay beside her. Many of his favorites were among them—Darwin, Kant, Hume, Nietzsche, William James, Münsterberg, and, for relaxation, Strindberg, Ibsen, Sudermann, Dostoevsky, Romain Rolland—a grim collection, full of meat but, for the most part, void of humor.

"Your taste in literature," observed Andrew, "is singularly akin to mine." He had adopted instinctively that preciseness, almost preciousness of speech that had always irritated Marcella Maynard. "Philosophy," he continued—"philosophy, the study of causes and results, of powers and of laws; and psychology, the study of the mind and the soul! The knowledge of those—ah, there is a star to which to hitch one's wagon!"

Miss Cholmondeley threw back her head with a sigh of rapture.

"I see," she said, "that you are one of us."

Andrew thought, then, that she was very beautiful.

"We," she went on, "whose thoughts delve beneath the surface of things, who strive to plumb depths hitherto unplumbed, must, in self-defense, stand by one another, an eager-eyed band, united against the scoffing ignorance of the superficial world. And we must console ourselves with the thought that we are the vanguard of the Army of Light. 'Light, or, fail-

ing that, lightning — the world can take its choice.' ”

“Ah,” murmured Andrew ecstatically — “Carlyle !”

“Yes,” she agreed, and relapsed into pleased, complacent silence, like an orator whose little set speech is done and well done.

A warm admiration of her entered into Andrew's heart. He visioned them, working together, seeking the light hand in hand, sharing each other's brain-throbs and soul-throbs, and, yes, perhaps later, when their brains and souls should be as one, sharing each other's heart-throbs, too. The sun, just then, shone very brightly on Saint Thomas Island.

His pleasant musings were interrupted by a succession of muffled shots, scarcely loud enough to emanate from a man's-size gun, but reminding Andrew of the report of an air-rifle that in his more frivolous youth he had possessed and functioned. He was a little alarmed.

“What's that?” he asked quickly.

Miss Cholmondeley, however, betraying not the slightest agitation, answered: “I imagine that would be father shooting land-crabs.”

“Shooting *what?*”

“Land-crabs,” she repeated. “They are a great nuisance, and they positively infest the garden. Their numbers never seem to grow less—but then, father isn't a very good shot. Perhaps I had better take you and introduce you to father. You'll have to meet him sooner

or later, in any case, and it is better, I think, to meet him early in the day when he is apt to be quite sober."

Andrew could not restrain a gasp. At first he thought that he must have misunderstood, but no — Miss Cholmondeley enunciated very distinctly. Then, for a brief moment, the suspicion came to him that he had found his way to a mad-house; but this explanation, too, he abandoned. Finally he concluded that Miss Cholmondeley possessed so great a soul that she was able to rise above being ashamed of a father who was "apt to be quite sober early in the day," and whose favorite outdoor recreation was hunting land-crabs with an air-rifle.

"She is a wonderful woman," he said to himself, as he followed her across the garden.

They made their way in the direction of the firing, the reports coming at intervals of about fifteen seconds, and serving as excellent guides.

At length Miss Cholmondeley motioned Andrew to stop, and, with a finger at her lips, commanded absolute silence. Crouching behind a bamboo-tree, sighting a diminutive air-rifle, was a man in a white pongee suit—a little, thin, elderly man, with a bright-red face and a bald head and a beak of a nose. He was actively engaged in loading and firing his air-rifle, but Andrew could not make out what the target was at which he aimed. As a matter of fact, Andrew was not sure that he should recognize a land-crab if he saw one.

"That would be nine of the beggars," muttered Mr. Cholmondeley.

"Don't you think, father, that that is enough for the morning," observed Miss Cholmondeley. "Besides, we have a guest to-day, whom you must meet. My father — Mr. Andrew Farley."

The little old man put down his air-rifle reluctantly and, rising, came over and shook Andrew's hand.

"How d'ye do?" he said shyly, like an embarrassed schoolboy. "I hope you'll stop with us a long time. Are you fond of shooting? I just bagged nine this morning—excellent sport."

"I'm sure it must be," said Andrew. "Are — are they hard to hit?"

"Oh, no—not very," Mr. Cholmondeley answered eagerly. "The little beggars pop back into their bloomin' holes very fast, though, if you startle 'em in any way. All it needs is a quick eye and great caution — great caution. Try a shot, if you like."

"No, thanks," said Andrew. "I'm not any good with a gun. Perhaps later——"

"Of course, of course. Just as you please." Mr. Cholmondeley appeared wofully disappointed. But presently, brightening up, he whispered in Andrew's ear: "Would you like a little something to drink? The dust and the heat and all that——"

Once more Andrew declined.

"Well, then," said Mr. Cholmondeley regretfully, "if you don't mind I think I'll try to make it a round dozen for the morning. Three more of the little beggars—just three more. Make yourself quite at home, won't you, Mr. Farley? Psyche, you'll look after Mr. Farley, I hope."

The girl smiled gravely.

"Yes, father," she said. "Mr. Farley and I have a great deal in common."

"Good enough, good enough," approved the little man. "Stop a long time with us Mr. Farley. I am glad that my daughter likes you. Psyche is an excellent judge—excellent. I hope you like her, too. She's a wonderful girl—my daughter by my first wife, who was a wonderful woman. I always had a great admiration for my first wife—perhaps because she was my first. You see, I've had three and familiarity breeds contempt. I can't say I cared much for the last two, and I'm sure they didn't care much for me, because they seemed very happy when they died. Well, well—run along now, I must get to work. And, Mr. Farley"—here once more he lowered his voice to a whisper—"if you get thirsty before luncheon, with the dust and the heat, I mix a very good green swizzle. Don't forget. Good-by."

Leaving Mr. Cholmondeley to complete his morning's work, they strolled down to the sea-wall and sat side by side upon it, dangling their legs over the edge.

"Do you like the sea?" demanded Psyche.
"Are you in tune with its moods?"

"I worship the sea!" exclaimed Andrew with enthusiasm.

"Ah," she answered—"that is nice of you." And then she added: "Yes, Mr. Farley, I think we have much in common."

She leaned back, plucked a scarlet poppy, and twirled it idly against her lips. The action was effective.

"I think," he cried, "that you are the most wonderful woman I have ever met! You are exotic, oriental—no, not oriental—Slav. That's it—Slav!"

"Thank you," said she. "I like to be told that, because it is always very hard for me to forget that I am English. Ugh!"—she shivered a little—"those cold-blooded, physical English! They are all body and no mind."

"Like the Americans," he added, thinking perhaps of Marcella Maynard.

And so, until luncheon-time, she derided the English, their manners, morals, and minds, and he did as much for the Americans. At the end of an hour he had convinced her that she was a superwoman, which, of course, she had always suspected; and she had given him to understand that he was a superman, which he was not unwilling to believe. Thus the time passed pleasantly.

At one o'clock the coffee-colored servant came through the garden, to announce luncheon,

beating on a huge brass gong, and presently, as they went up to the terrace, Mr. Cholmondeley joined them, red in the face and perspiring freely.

III

DURING luncheon Mr. Cholmondeley, with the aid of several green swizzles, became very talkative. He told Andrew at great length of his boyhood home in England—Little Boggsby, Kenbridge Green, Devon. He told him of certain misadventures in finance that had led him to quit Little Boggsby; he told him of his three marriages, and of the birth of Psyche, whom they had christened Maria—whom, indeed, they had called Maria until she reached the age of rebellion—and he told him of his recent prosperity here at Saint Thomas through the manufacture of rum. His only regret, he said, was that he was unable to give Psyche social opportunities.

"But she has the society of her books," objected Andrew.

"Yes," agreed Mr. Cholmondeley, "but she can't *marry* a bloomin' book!" And he cast a sly look at Andrew, and went through the motion of digging him in the ribs. Andrew was a little disgusted—it was all so earthy in contrast with the ethereal morning. It was like listening to ragtime after Debussy.

"All that Psyche needs is a good, hap-

py, comfortable marriage," concluded Mr. Cholmondeley. "It will settle her — and Psyche wants settling."

Andrew could not openly agree with this statement, nor could he, on so short an intimacy, venture to disagree; but he registered inwardly a violent protest. Psyche, in his eyes, needed no settling, and, moreover, he refused to regard marriage as a settling institution—like an egg in the coffee. Marriage, surely, was something higher than that. . . .

That very afternoon Psyche assured him that she agreed with him—that marriage was something far higher than that.

"Marriage," she said gravely, "is the joining of two flames. Although both may have been bright flames before they were joined, the resultant flame is just twice as strong and brilliant. If one was a weak flame, its weakness is overcome by the strength of the other; and so closely are they merged that it is impossible to discern which was the weak and which the strong."

"What a beautiful thought!" said Andrew.

She sighed and turned her intense green eyes heavenward.

"I have many thoughts," she murmured, "but until now I have had no one to listen to them."

He bent over her (she was on a sofa in the marble-paved living-room), and before he knew it he was holding her long white hand in his.

There were at least six rings on her hand, all set with emeralds, so that it was an uncomfortable hand to press. Nevertheless, Spartan-like, he pressed it.

"Why," he asked, "do you persist in living here alone—in isolating yourself from the world? You could sit at the tables of kings, and the greatest of intellects of the earth would be proud to do you honor."

But she shook her head sadly.

"There is father," she said. "I cannot leave father."

True, there was father—uncomfortable thought!—father with his land-crabs and his green swizzles. Obviously, father could not be included at king's tables, nor would great intellects rush to do him honor. Still, could not father be left behind?

"Your father has so many interests—" he began, and let the pause speak for itself.

"Yes," she answered, "his is a very full life."

For some reason or other this response left Andrew cold. . . .

But, although he made no definite progress that day, he felt that sooner or later Psyche and he must arrive at an understanding. He felt that when two kindred souls are groping toward each other, even in the dark, they are bound eventually to touch. So far they had but brushed each other's wings. Ah, but there remained to-morrow and more to-morrows—golden to-morrows, all replete with the com-

panionship and the stimulus of Psyche and her beautiful mind. He fell asleep that night with the blissful conviction that he was in an intellectual Eden—an Eden where the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge was the *spécialité de la maison*.

IV

HE slept peacefully enough until about two o'clock in the morning, when he was aroused by a sound of scuffling in the hall. Lighting a candle and opening the door, he discovered that Shem, the *café-au-lait* man servant, was assisting Mr. Cholmondeley to bed, and that Mr. Cholmondeley, although patently in need of assistance, was resenting it.

"Can't have those beashly crabs crawlin' up the wall," Mr. Cholmondeley protested.

"They eyen't crabs," Shem assured him. "They's the pictures on the new wall-piper." And with a vigorous shove he got Mr. Cholmondeley out of the hall into his room.

"Good lord," groaned Andrew, as he blew out his candle, "how can that beast be father to such a wonderful girl!"

With this thought came high resolve: he would marry the girl and take her away—far away from this sordid environment. And he would take her even against her will; he would play the Roman to her Sabine woman; he would prove himself a very man. And so he slept

again, this time until far into the following morning.

The mornings, he found, gave him many opportunities for conversation with Psyche, for Mr. Cholmondeley usually stayed in bed until luncheon. Thus Andrew and Psyche were able to plumb each other's souls to their hearts' content with no interruptions of the earth earthy. Each day Andrew fancied that he made new discoveries, each day Psyche revealed a new and sparkling soul-aspect, and each day Andrew grew more certain that she was the one woman in the world to make him happy. She was his psychical supplement!

On the morning of the eighth day he delivered his rather carefully prepared speech. Trying to make it appear that he extemporized, however, he said:

"There is no doubt—and even the most transcendental intellects have admitted it—that love is a very potent force. Many claim that life is incomplete without it, a view which of course is not shared by Plato or Sir Isaac Newton. But I imagine that even they take exception only to sensuous love—the love which attacks the senses exclusively and which takes no account of the soul and the mind. A great love, the real love, involves all three, and that is the only love that I recognize. Psyche, my dear, I love you with my body, my soul, and my mind, or, better, to put them in the order of their importance, with my soul and my mind

and my body. I need you, Psyche, I need you psychically and mentally and—yes, and physically. Do you feel any such need of me?"

He paused there, satisfied that he had presented his case satisfactorily. True he had not been very passionate, but he believed that passion was for people of baser clay. With Marcella Maynard, for example, he had quite been carried away. How much saner this was—how much less bestial!

He paused, then, for her to speak. But she, not having prepared an adequate reply in advance, resorted, I regret to say, to the methods employed by primitive woman: she threw her arms around Andrew's neck and kissed him violently on the lips. During the process, unexpected and startling though it was, Andrew had time and opportunity to realize how thin she was. Indeed, her physical deficiencies temporarily quite overbalanced her undoubted psychological and mental advantages. She was a superwoman, true—but a very angular superwoman. He recalled, in spite of himself, the comfortably rounded contours of Marcella, the exquisite smoothness of her skin, the vague yet exhilarating scent of her hair—and then, with an effort, he put such treachery by, for Psyche, having found in the duration of the embrace ample time to marshal her forces, was giving utterance to great soul thoughts.

Said she: "My being takes fire at the touch of your lips, and, though the contact be physical,

yet do I seem to cast off the weight of clay that chains me to the earth, and my soul, taking wings, soars high among the stars. I am conscious of new power; new vistas reveal themselves; I seem to see more clearly, as though a veil had been taken from before my eyes. Life, and its solution, has suddenly lost its complexity; the mysteries of existence have dissolved like a fog before a wind from the sea. Everything is crystal-clear. That, Andrew, is love!"

"Yes, my dearest," sighed Andrew, patting her shoulder-blades, "that is the morning of love."

V

THEY chose to announce their betrothal to Mr. Cholmondeley at dinner that evening. Psyche, consenting to come to earth for an instant, had suggested that her father was always in his most receptive mood at that hour—that before dinner he was apt to be very petulant, and that after dinner he was apt not to remember anything that was told him. Andrew hastily agreed.

Mr. Cholmondeley, having mixed himself several green swizzles was, in truth, very genial and hearty. He received the announcement with enthusiasm, and with so little surprise that Andrew was vaguely disturbed.

"I congratulate you, Mr.—er——"

"Mr. Farley," supplied Psyche.

"Yes, to be sure—Mr. Farley. I congratulate you, Mr. Farley, on your choice of a mate. Freely and ungrudgingly I give you the one flower of my garden—my last and only rose. It is more blessed to give than to receive." And he sat down, wholly unconscious that this last might well be misinterpreted.

Then, already in excellent spirits, he called for champagne.

At eleven o'clock Mr. Cholmondeley had reached a stage in his intoxication when Psyche seemed to him a most precious jewel that he was bestowing upon Andrew. She was more than his jewel, she was his one ewe lamb, she was his ray of sunlight, she was the staff of his old age; in brief, she was all that he had to live for. He sincerely hoped that Andrew appreciated the sacrifice that he was making in giving her up. He liked Andrew—yes, he liked Andrew extremely, but, by heaven, there was no man alive worthy of his little Psyche.

"To me she's always little Psyche," he explained. "Never growshup. All fathersatway, I suppose."

Andrew strenuously endeavored to match his enthusiasm, but Andrew, remaining sober, found it a difficult task. The best he could do was to acquiesce silently to Mr. Cholmondeley's wildest eulogies, or to murmur at intervals: "Indeed she is," or "You're quite right, sir," or "She certainly is a remarkable woman."

This, however, did not fully satisfy his future father-in-law, who began to rebuke Andrew for undue coolness. He wanted to see more warmth, more gratitude for the blessings that had been vouchsafed him. He grew querulous; he was damned if he thought Andrew realized how highly he had been honored. And his parting words, as Shem led him off to bed, were: "You're a bloomin' iceberg. Makes me shiver to look at you. Reg'lar heart of ice, you have, reg'lar heart of ice. Can't you thaw, damn you, can't you thaw?"

Then, with great dignity, he shook Andrew by the hand and, slyly, that Shem might not hear, whispered: "You jus' wait till you know Psyche better. She'll thaw your heart of ice, she will, good and proper. Psyche's a reg'lar Gulf Stream for thawing icebergs."

There was something ominous about this admonition, and indeed, as Andrew looked back on it, there was something disquieting about the entire evening. He found that he could not sleep for thinking of it. More than once as he lay in bed he wondered if he were not engaged in a foolish venture. It was all very splendid, of course, this Lochinvar impetuosity, but . . .

His meditations were interrupted by a succession of shots fired in the hall. At once he recognized the gasping pop of Mr. Cholmondeley's air-rifle, and he thanked heaven that his future father-in-law made use of no more dan-

gerous weapon. The firing continued with short pauses between shots, during which Mr. Cholmondeley's voice could be heard complaining of his lack of success.

"Could have sworn," said he, "that I bagged the bloomin' beggar that time." And then: "Confound his eyes, he's climbin' up the wall!"

Presently Shem appeared from some mysterious region—a frightened, white-eyed, gray-faced Shem. Without a second's hesitation Mr. Cholmondeley turned and pointed the gun at him.

"What the devil are *you* int'ferin' for?" cried Mr. Cholmondeley—"interruptin' my shootin' like that. *You* go back to bed—straight. Can't have you always botherin' me and spoilin' sport."

At this point, when Shem seemed to be in danger, Andrew felt called upon to intervene; so he opened wide his door and clad only in one of Mr. Cholmondeley's nightshirts, walked barefooted into the hall. His appearance created a momentary diversion, for Mr. Cholmondeley swung round on him in a rage.

"Here's another!" he exclaimed—"here's another spoil-sport. Can't be let alone in peace in this house. Here I come out to kill these bloomin' crabs that are swarmin' up the wall—tryin' to protect the sleepin' household, I am—and what thanks do I get? None. Nothin' but int'ference."

"*They* eyen't crabs," quavered Shem.

"They's the pattern on the new wallpaper. I told you so last time."

Mr. Cholmondeley drew himself up in cold dignity.

"I beg your pardon," he said, "but I won't permit a servant of mine to contradict me in mownouse. I say they're crabs, and crabs they are; and they must be 'sterminated."

He aimed his air-rifle unsteadily at a brown arabesque—one of many—that decorated the wall-paper. But the multiplicity of similar figures seemed so to unnerve him that the barrel of his gun wavered from one to the other alarmingly. Finally, he closed his eyes and pulled the trigger, and the bullet embedded itself with a splutter in the plaster.

Andrew, motioning to Shem to help him, stepped quickly forward and seized Mr. Cholmondeley by the shoulders, while Shem struggled for possession of the air-rifle. But Mr. Cholmondeley, righteously indignant at such sly tactics, resisted and shouted for help. They made a great din, the three of them—so great that Psyche was aroused from her rosy slumber, and came, dishevelled, to see what was amiss.

Now Psyche, dishevelled, was no very attractive sight. It is the painful duty of the realist to depict his heroines as they are, not as they should be, and in this case the duty is very painful indeed. Let us harden our hearts to romance, then, and blurt out the brutal

truth: Psyche, as she advanced in her nightgown and slippers, was a ridiculous, untidy, unkempt caricature of a woman. Andrew noted with a pang that she had left a great deal of her beautiful hair behind her, and that what remained was scant and stringy and done up in patent curlers. She had applied cold-cream so generously to her face that she shone like a sun at noon. She had angles at unexpected places, some decently obtuse, but many—those at her elbows, for instance—indecently acute. Where one would have expected her to be convex she was concave, and vice versa. She—but no! I can go no further. I am not a Zola. . . .

Andrew covering his face with his hands, turned and fled, like Æneas from the harpies.

His flight ended for the time in his bedroom, where he cowered, filled with a great revulsion. Crack! His idol had toppled off her pedestal. No greatness of soul, no splendor of intellect could atone for the sheer ugliness of his idol's body.

The clamor in the hall increased rather than diminished, and now there was added to it a woman's voice, Psyche's, shrill and unmodulated. In her excitement she lapsed almost into the cockney of the servants.

"Hush up, you blighter," he heard her say to her father. "Do you want to spoil everything! Wot's Mr. Farley going to think of all this, I'd like to know!"

Mr. Cholmondeley replied that he was

damned if he cared what Mr. Farley thought, whereupon Psyche retorted that it was a nice father she had, a nice father, indeed. And, to explain her meaning more fully, she pointed out to him that he was a drunken sot. At this Mr. Cholmondeley, quite naturally, burst into tears, murmuring between sobs disjointed phrases relative to the ingratitude of the young.

There followed a silence; then Shem's persuasive voice urging Mr. Cholmondeley to his room; then unsteady footsteps down the hall, the opening and closing of a door; then more silence, this time prolonged.

But with the silence there came to Andrew no sleep, nor any desire for sleep. His mind was made up to one thing: he would spend not another night in the house that sheltered Mr. and Miss Cholmondeley. The realization of how narrowly he had escaped leading Psyche to the altar struck him like a blow and left him shaking but resolved. He had got himself into a mess—it but remained to get himself out. How to do it? The answer stared him in the face. Flight!

True, he had no definite place to which to flee, and no clothes to flee in save those that he had worn on the day of his arrival. Since then Mr. Cholmondeley had generously supplied him his wardrobe. But there was a steamer in the harbor—that he remembered—an old, sea-battered tramp, come probably for coal, and bound God knew whither. The Pan-

ama Canal? Trinidad? Brazil? It mattered not. At that moment the Black Hole of Calcutta would have been more acceptable than Saint Thomas.

Ten minutes later, in his stocking feet, carrying his shoes in his hand, Andrew Farley stepped cautiously out into the dark hall. No convict attempting an escape from Sing-Sing was ever filled with more trepidation; no burglar entering a house was ever so apprehensive as Andrew leaving this one. And, of course, when silence was at such a premium, he tripped idiotically on the stairs and fell to the landing with a great crash.

He picked himself up, dazed and sore, and so miserable that he could have wept. He was filled with an immeasurable self-pity. Everybody and everything were against him.

While he was rubbing his limbs on the landing he heard above him the sound of stealthy footsteps—stealthy but erratic; and presently there appeared the light of a candle, zigzagging like a firefly. Holding the candle, and responsible for its uncertain course, was Mr. Cholmondeley, clad now only in his nightshirt and a pair of elastic-sided slippers. But Mr. Cholmondeley carried something else besides the candle—something long and slender and shining, something with a polished wooden butt and a round of steel barrel. And Mr. Cholmondeley's eye was filled with the lust of the huntsman.

Andrew did not linger to parley or to speak him soft. He took the stairs in three amazing leaps. Mr. Cholmondeley was slower, but at that he made the descent with surprising rapidity and incredible noise, and at each step he cried: "Ah, ha, you're tryin' to escape, are you!" in a tone that sent a chill to Andrew's already overtaxed heart. At the landing Mr. Cholmondeley flung the candlestick in the direction that he imagined Andrew's head to be, missing his mark by a scant two inches—a very fair shot, indeed. Andrew paused long enough to retaliate with his shoes, one after the other, and the second one elicited a grunt of distress from his pursuer and checked his progress for several very valuable seconds. During this time Andrew was able to slip through the front door and slam it behind him. Once outside, he paused for a quick breath of the night air and started on a run for the gate and the road to Charlotte-Amalia.

Now the night had been made for love, not for hate. It was a night for whispered vows and long caresses—for hands to clasp and lips to meet and eyes to speak fondly to starry eyes. A tropical moon swam warmly in a warm sky; a breeze off the sea bore subtle perfumes of roses from the garden and stirred the plume-like branches of the royal palms so that they seemed to fan the stars. A gentle night, a sensuous night, a very night of love.

But, behold, here was Andrew, philosopher

and sage, apostle of the soul and student of the fundamental, fleeing, shoeless and dishevelled, from her who was (or, at least, had seemed to be) his supplemental woman. To do him justice, however, the more immediate and active cause of his flight was his supplemental woman's father.

Did I say immediate and active? Mr. Cholmondeley was both.

At the gate Andrew had a scant twenty yards' start, and as he rounded the turn into the road he heard the vicious spit of Mr. Cholmondeley's air-rifle, and a bullet went ping! in the dust behind him.

Silver-white in the moonlight, and curving easily and gracefully with the contour of the shore, lay the road to Charlotte-Amalia. A low stone wall, vine-clad, bordered it on the left, stemming the green tide of tropic foliage that rolled luxuriantly down from the hills. On the right, screened only by the contorted trunks of trees that persisted, in the face of common sense, in growing among the rocks, was the far-resounding sea. There was no escape, then, either to right or to left. Where the road went, there must Andrew go, a desperately speeding figure under the moon.

And where Andrew went, Mr. Cholmondeley followed, as swift as the vengeance of the gods and as inevitable. A mad flight, that was—an epic flight, a Homeric flight, with Andrew the Hector and Mr. Cholmondeley the

swift-footed Achilles. The gods shook the stars with their laughter.

Andrew and his pursuer ran in silence the first hundred yards, and Andrew more than held his own. Perceiving this, Mr. Cholmondeley began to hurl invective. He called Andrew a Don Juan and a damned Lothario, and, for emphasis, he again fired his air-rifle. This cost him several yards, but he had the satisfaction of knowing that his aim had at last been true; for Andrew gave a little cry, stumbled in his stride and then, spurred on by pain, sprang away with increased speed. Fortunately an air-gun does not often kill.

And now, as Andrew raced along the pale, winding road, he turned his back to the moon and his shadow shot frantically out ahead of him—a long, lean, grotesque shadow, that clutched and leaped and swayed on spider-like legs. For one brief, heart-breaking instant Andrew believed it to be his pursuer's shadow, coming on him from behind; but a glance over his shoulder reassured him. Mr. Cholmondeley was struggling prodigiously a full hundred yards back.

The road, deserting the sea, presently widened and became smoother and an occasional house gleamed pink or yellow behind the palms. They were approaching the village. Soon their footsteps echoed in the quiet streets, rousing a lonely dog from his slumber—a dog that immediately joined whole-heartedly in the

chase. But Charlotte-Amalia, undisturbed, or too languid to heed, slept peacefully behind closed shutters.

In the same square by the quay there was no one to witness Andrew's hurried arrival. The black boys that plied their little flat-bottomed boats about the harbor during the day, had long since departed, as had the venders of fruit and vegetables. The cab-stand was deserted; even the bar that dispensed "fine sippings" to the thirsty displayed no signs of animation. But out in the harbor, perhaps a quarter of a mile from the quay, swung the lights of the tramp steamer. And the presence of that tramp steamer was all that concerned Andrew at the moment.

There was no ferryman—that was obvious—but there were plenty of ferries, the black boys having drawn their fleet of tiny, brightly colored boats high up on the beach and left them unguarded and unlocked. But Andrew knew himself to be an uncertain oarsman, and observation had taught him that the little boats were first-rate sieves, hospitable to sea water. His momentary hesitation was cut short, however, by the sound of hurrying footsteps and panting imprecations, and, like Macbeth, he realized that if it were to be done, 'twere well it were done quickly.

He selected a nice little pink boat named *Sea Rover*, seized it clumsily amidships, and launched it in the sea. Then he tried to get

into it. Mr. Cholmondeley, arriving in haste, stood on the beach and laughed at him—laughed and panted and laughed—and every time that Andrew seemed about to succeed, Mr. Cholmondeley would take careful aim with the air-gun and fire. This proved most disconcerting.

Then Mr. Cholmondeley, perceiving further possibilities of entertainment, began to sing and to do a sort of barbaric dance. For the most part he sang songs of the sea, with many yo-ho-hos and avasts and belays and the like; and he completed the programme by rendering "Baby's bed's a little boat, sailing on the sea," punctuating the end of every line with a shot from his air-gun—thus:

"Sail, baby,—*ping*
Out across the—*zip*
Only don't forget to—*bing*
Back again to—*blip*."

But in all this Andrew could see no humor.

When he finally managed to clamber successfully into the *Sea Rover*, he was smarting physically from the cannonade and mentally from the ignominy of his predicament. He seized the oars in a sullen rage and pulled for the lights of the tramp steamer. Out to him across the moonlit water was borne the sound of Mr. Cholmondeley's voice, wistfully intoning "Crossing the Bar."

VI

THREE weeks later Andrew landed in New York, sadder and wiser. As soon as he had donned proper clothing he went to see Marcella Maynard, and very humbly begged her to reconsider her decision. He pointed out that during the last months he had suffered much, and that suffering has made him more tolerant, more human. He asserted that he saw things differently now, that he had discovered that the true secret of happiness lay not within the mind, but within the heart, and that a soul, to be truly beautiful, must have a beautiful envelope. He was inclined to doubt, he said, that lilies grew in mire.

Marcella did not understand him until he seized her in his arms and commenced to whisper baby talk into her ear. Then she sighed comfortably, murmured "Now you're my nice, old Andy," and raised her face to be kissed.

And so they were married and lived happily ever after, with many children and few brain-throbs; and Andrew made a huge bonfire in the back yard of their suburban villa, and to it consigned his library of philosophers and psychologists and other purveyors of indigestible mental food, exclaiming as he did so: "*Gloria Veneri!*"

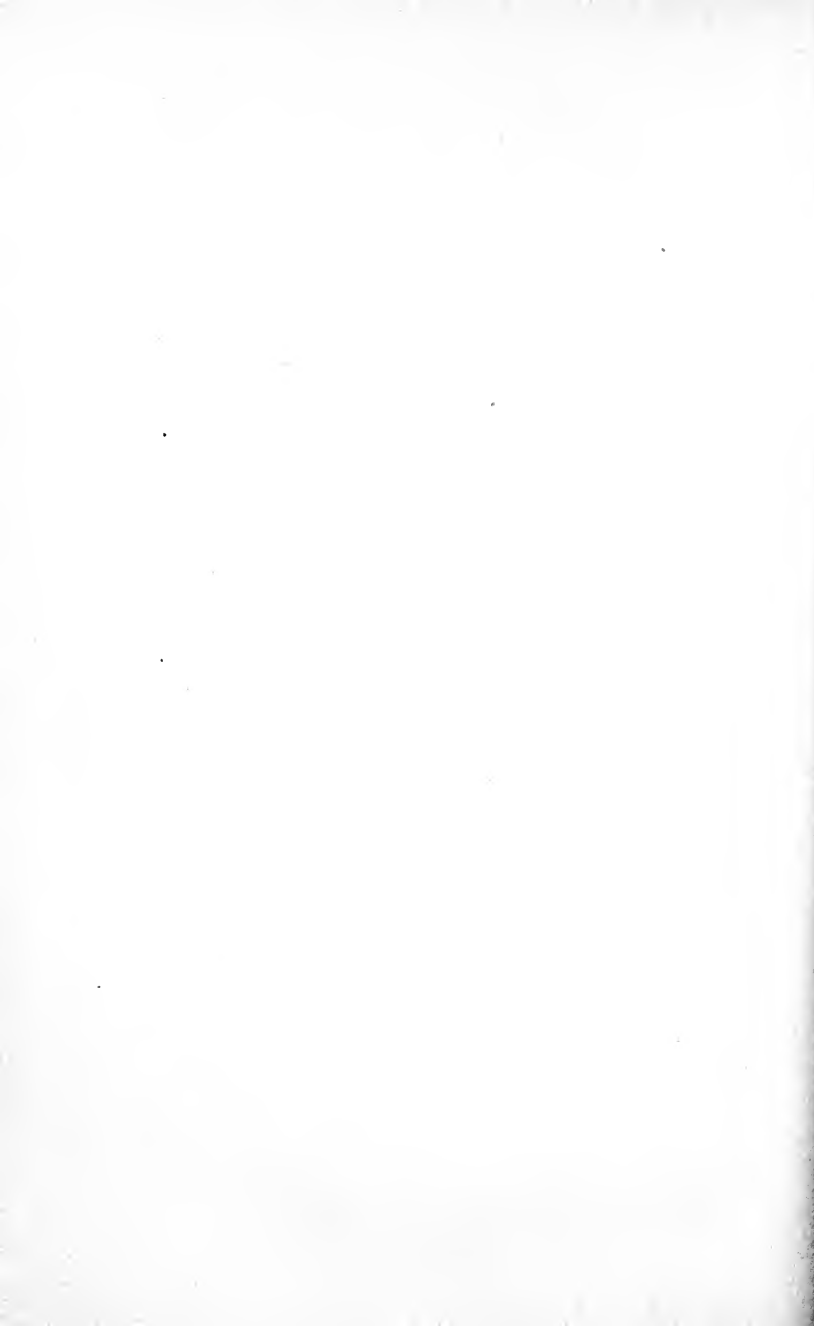
"What does that mean?" inquired Marcella, as she tossed six volumes of Ibsen to the flames.

Andrew hesitated an instant; then he translated freely.

"That," he said, "means: 'Down with the emancipated woman!'"

"Oh," murmured Marcella—"you *have* changed!"

"Yes," agreed Andrew meditatively. "I like 'em old-fashioned and—plump."



JEANNE, THE MAID

JEANNE, THE MAID

NOTHING else that Richard Barclay ever did during his active, startling life surprised me so much as his joining the Roman Catholic Church. It is true that I would never have accused him of being a pagan or an atheist—he is too modern for the one and too imaginative for the other—but I had always marked him down as one of those non-practising Episcopalians who accept the religion of their fathers as unthinkingly as they accept their baptismal names. “Who gave you this name?” “My sponsors in baptism.” “And who gave you this religion?” “Why, I suppose they did, too.”

But it has always been impossible to put Richard Barclay into a pigeonhole and say: “There, that is where he belongs—that is his species, that is his variety.” He is a man whom you cannot catalogue, or, rather, whom you can catalogue only under a score of different headings. For example, it is difficult definitely to state even his profession: he is a war correspondent—yes, and he is a philologist; he is an explorer, undeniably; and he is a historian, having written a life of Charles VI, in I forget how many volumes; he is a soldier of fortune when he is unfortunate enough to have nothing

better to occupy him; and he is a botanist no matter how pressing his other occupations may be. A man of many and varied talents, you perceive, who might to-day have been a very famous man had he chosen to exercise any one of them continuously and exclusively.

Although he is perhaps thirty-eight years old, he appears younger; and he is handsome in a dark, tanned, healthy way. Women look at him twice, and having looked, grow irritable with their husbands. And yet he has something of the ascetic about him—not that he is sallow or starved or soulful-eyed—but he conveys very forcibly an impression of supreme cleanliness and health, both mental and physical.

I am probably the best friend that he has in New York, and during his brief visits to that city he makes a point of looking me up, either at my club or at my bachelor apartment. We dine together and he tells me of his latest exploits in whichever one of his professions he has been practising. I, for my part, having nothing in my life but humdrum routine, make, I imagine, an appreciative listener. Now that I think of it, ever since our days at boarding-school, I have been Barclay's audience: he has never been mine.

Barclay had been in France when the war broke out: that much I knew; but where in France or why in France I knew not. One evening in the middle of last March he returned to New York and enlightened me.

My Jap served us dinner in my rooms, for Barclay insisted that he preferred to be alone with me that first evening. He said that his soul had been spaded up and turned under, just as you do with soil to make it more fertile, and that out of the hitherto barren ground had sprung up a most wonderful bloom—mystical, golden, awing. And then, with no further warning, he told me that he had become a Roman Catholic. I stammered out my astonishment, while he sat unmoved, his chair pushed back from the table, sipping his coffee. Unmoved? Yes, except for a slight glow in his thin brown cheeks and a new, unfathomable light in his eyes.

"You are surprised?" he inquired.

"Yes—why, yes—naturally. It's rather sudden, isn't it?"

"Quite sudden," he answered. "Most revelations of faith are. There was Peter, and Andrew, you remember, and Paul, and—yes, and Mary Magdalene."

"That is true," I agreed, "but they lived in the days when Christ walked the earth. They saw miracles being wrought."

He nodded slowly, his eyes fixed on the table, his fingers playing with the coffee-spoon. Then he threw back his head abruptly and said: "I, too, have seen miracles being wrought."

He was so absolutely serious, so much in earnest, when he made this remarkable statement that I was at a loss how to reply. I did

not want to hurt his feelings, but I might have reminded him that the Church puts no faith in latter-day miracles, and that many advanced theologians refuse to accept even the New Testament miracles literally.

I think that he perceived my trouble, for he said: "Oh, no — I'm not mad. And I'm thoroughly sincere. I know, I know—here in hard, matter-of-fact New York it sounds preposterous, but wait until I've told you about it and then judge for yourself."

I felt that vague uneasiness you experience when some one starts to tell a ghost story, and mingled with that was a certain reluctance to sit by and witness a man lay bare the innermost sanctuary of his soul. However, it was clear that Barclay would not be content until he should have told me the story; so I lighted a cigar to keep my nerves in hand, and told him to begin.

"Last spring," said he, "I spent walking in the Vosges Mountains, just across the border from Alsace-Lorraine. I did a little botanizing and a little stone-tapping, but mostly I breathed in health and happiness with the air. I strayed about aimlessly enough—that was one of the refreshing things about it, that I had no definite aim. A definite aim, no matter how satisfactory it may be when attained, always involves a certain amount of labored plodding, and life is too short to plod in—or, perhaps better, to those that plod life seems often too long."

I acquiesced rather bitterly. I am afraid that I am a plodder.

"Well, at any rate," he continued, "toward the end of June I found myself not far from a village—a village so small that you can find it on few maps, and yet a village whose name once rang around the world. Perhaps the name, even now, will mean something to you—Domremy. What does it bring to your mind, that name—Domremy? Do you see a girl kneeling in a garden beside the churchyard? Do you hear a rushing of white wings as St. Michael stands before her? Do you see her, clad in armor, a straight slender figure astride a huge white horse? Do you hear the trampling of hoofs and the shouts of men as she leads an army into battle, ever triumphant under the lilies of France? Do you see her raise a siege at Orléans and crown a king at Reims? And, finally, do you see her kissing the cross as the flames reach up to her, where she stands a martyr at the stake?"

His eyes glowed feverishly, fanatically, and he rose from his chair and commenced to pace the room.

"Jeanne d'Arc," I murmured.

"Yes," he repeated, "Jeanne d'Arc—Jeanne, the Maid."

It was a full minute before he could control himself sufficiently to continue.

"I went to Domremy," he said at length, "and I saw the house in which she was born and

the garden in which she heard the Voices. Even then I was interested in her only as you, yourself, are interested in her. I considered her the heroine of a charming legend—a legend based perhaps on a slim foundation of fact. Since then I have learned better. In my eyes she stands to-day second only to our Lord as a witness of God manifest on earth. She is an irrefutable argument for Christianity, and since none believed more devoutly than she in the Pope of Rome and the Pope *in* Rome—there were two popes then, you remember—it follows that if you believe her Christianity you believe also her Catholicism.”

“She was martyred by her own church,” I pointed out.

“And Christ was denied and betrayed by his own disciples,” added Barclay. “Besides, her own church rehabilitated her and made her a saint. All the great prophets have been stoned during their lifetimes—it is only when they are dead that they receive their just rewards. It was that way always and it shall be that way always. It was that way—it was that way last August, when another name was added to the noble army of martyrs.”

“Tell me about him,” I urged.

“It wasn’t a man,” said Barclay—“it was a girl—a young girl. I scarcely know how to begin, and it is hard to find words with which to tell about it. It is very sacred to me, you see. I feel that I need the words of a Matthew

or a Mark, and I haven't them. I am, at best, only a war correspondent.

"She was called Jeanne—there is a coincidence there—Jeanne Leblanc. I saw her first the night I arrived in Domremy—a wet, windy night in late June. I saw her last—well, never mind that yet.

"I told you that I had been walking, didn't I? I had done about fifty kilometres that day since breakfast—the last dozen of them through a gusty rain, shot with white lightning and laden with complaints of thunder. My road followed the course of the Meuse, usually a lazy, pleasant stream, but now flecked with foam and murmuring uneasily at its margins. Road and river wound through vineyards and pastureland, sweet with the fragrance of moist soil and wet leaves—a cool fragrance that you never get when the sun is high.

"I suppose that it was about seven o'clock—it was deep twilight—when I saw ahead of me a handful of houses, clustered snugly about a church spire that pointed like a long, slim finger to heaven. Smoke, white against the sky, was rising from the chimneys, and yellow squares of light marked the windows. Domremy was peaceful even in the stormy night.

"A man in a blue blouse, driving a covered two-wheeled cart, replied to my inquiry regarding lodging by directing me to the house of Armand Leblanc.

"'Across the bridge, the last house on the

left. It is not far, m'sieu', and he makes every one welcome—he and his poor girl.'

" 'His poor girl?' I repeated, wondering at the adjective.

" 'Yes,' he answered, nodding; 'm'sieu' will discover for himself, but m'sieu' need not be alarmed—she is a little mad, but quite gentle and would not harm a sparrow. She is well loved here, m'sieu', and I should not be surprised if she were nearer to *le bon Dieu* than most of us who can see only the ground we walk on. Yes, m'sieu', across the bridge, the last house on the left. Not at all, m'sieu'. *Pas de quoi*. Good night, m'sieu'.'

"I found the house with no difficulty, and Jeanne Leblanc, herself, opened the door at my knock. I wish I could describe her so that you could see her, or at least give you some hint of her. At the time I first saw her I think perhaps I could have done so, but now, for me she has come to be a symbol of so much that she transcends any power of word-painting I possess. A young Madonna? No, not quite: her feet seemed fixed too firmly upon the earth. Perhaps more of a Jeanne d'Arc—the Jeanne of Domremy, however, not the more confident Jeanne of Orléans and Reims; the Jeanne still seeing visions, not the Jeanne fulfilling them. That was to come later—the fulfilment.

"Her features are more easily described—the narrow, oval face with the closely coiffed golden hair drawn back smoothly from the high

white brow; the ascetic mouth, thin and straight-lipped; the wide, far-seeing eyes, clear as a child's, wondering much and yet filled with all knowledge. That much of her I can describe, I say—the mere garment of her soul—and that much of her, were I a Raphael, I could put on canvas. That much and no more.

"She opened the door—I heard her wooden sabots come clicking across the floor—and, a lamp in her hand, she immediately stood aside to let me in. Nor did she ask my business, nor who I was, nor where I had come from. It was apparent that, as my friend of the covered cart had told me, every one was welcome at the house of Armand Leblanc.

"‘You are very wet,’ she said, ‘and doubtless very cold. If you will leave your cloak here in the hall and come into the kitchen you will find supper ready—and in the kitchen it is warm.’

"I bowed and said that she was very kind; but she seemed surprised that I should consider it kindness. She led me through a door at the back of the hall into the kitchen where, at the end of a pine table, sat a grizzled, bearded man in a peasant's smock, whom I rightly judged to be Leblanc. At my entrance he rose, bowed, and said: ‘*Soyez le bienvenu, m'sieu*’.' Then he returned to his interrupted meal.

"Jeanne indicated a chair for me at the table, and, having served me in spite of my protestations, herself took a seat opposite her father.

We ate in silence, although I made several half-hearted attempts to discuss the weather. At length, however, when Jeanne had cleared away the dishes and Leblanc had lit his pipe, they seemed disposed to enter into conversation. But never did they question me as to my name or my business—it was as if I had lived with them always, as if I were one of the family returned after a brief absence.

“‘This rain should help the crops,’ observed Père Leblanc, through the smoke of his pipe.

“‘And the garden,’ added Jeanne. ‘How the roses will welcome it! To-day they were so tired.’

“‘I thought that her father regarded her a little suspiciously at this—suspiciously but not unkindly.

“‘Have you been long in the garden to-day?’ he inquired.

“‘Until it rained,’ she answered.

“‘You are fond of flowers, mademoiselle?’ I put in, trying to be pleasant. ‘So am I. I shall look forward to seeing your garden to-morrow morning, if the rain is over by then.’

“‘She shook her head.

“‘The storm will be worse to-morrow,’ she said, simply. ‘It will last for many days. God is very angry with the world.’

“‘Hush, Jeanne,’ murmured Père Leblanc. ‘You must not talk that way before m’sieu’.

“‘She did not seem to understand; she looked

up at him appealingly, like a child who has been reprimanded for no just reason.

"‘I am sorry,’ said she. ‘Must I then keep silent about that which is revealed to me? Surely it is not something to be ashamed of—something to conceal.’

"Leblanc sighed, glanced at me meaningly, and shook his head.

"‘Pardon, m’sieu,’ said he; ‘my little Jean-not has fancies: she imagines things—or else, indeed, she sees more than our eyes can ever see.’ And he tapped his forehead with the characteristic French gesture.

"I was embarrassed to reply; but I finally stammered out something to the effect that the vision of the young is often clearer and truer than that of us older, wiser men. Leblanc nodded, sadly but acquiescently, and I turned to Jeanne.

"‘Do you believe,’ I asked, ‘that God sends a storm to show that He is angry with the world?’

"‘I don’t know,’ she answered. ‘But *this* storm He sent to show that He is angry. And this storm is but the beginning. Before the year is over it will rain blood.’

"Leblanc shivered and crossed himself. She had made the statement quietly, but with absolute conviction, as if she had said: ‘To-morrow we shall have *crouête-au-pot* for supper.’

"Whether it was from a certain morbid curiosity or whether even then I sensed that she

was in touch with—well, never mind—at any rate, I could not refrain from questioning her.

“‘Why do you say that?’ I ventured.

“She opened her eyes very wide in surprise, and then she smiled on me, as if forgiving my absurd question, and said: ‘Because it’s the truth, m’sieu’. My Voices told me.’

“It was then that I recollected we were in Domremy; and I remembered Jeanne d’Arc and the Voices that spoke to her as she knelt in the garden. And just as you are doing now, no doubt, I reasoned that this other Jeanne had been brought up on the legend, had brooded over it, and had clasped it to her heart until she imagined that to her, also, there came angels from heaven to comfort her and to guide her. Yes, I admit that that seemed the natural solution. But wait!

“The next morning I awoke to the sound of rain beating on my casement window. The storm had increased overnight, and, although there was neither lightning nor thunder, the wind had risen to an alarming velocity, and as I looked out I could see the trees bending low before it, their branches whipping and thrashing like ribbons of a split sail in a hurricane. That Jeanne had prophesied truly concerning the storm occupied my mind but little, for a sailor or a fisherman or a New England farmer could have done as much: what I had to consider was that it would be madness for me to attempt to leave four walls and a roof on such

a day. So I determined to seek out Père Leblanc and arrange to stay with him as a paying guest until the weather should render my departure possible. And that, briefly, is how it came about that I stayed in Domremy and learned to know Jeanne Leblanc—Jeanne, the Maid.”

Here Barclay paused and asked for a fresh cup of coffee. I could see that the recital had stirred him greatly, and his hand shook as he bore the cup to his lips. He smiled a little ruefully when he saw that I had noticed his agitation.

“You thought I was a man without nerves?” he inquired. “I don’t know—I don’t know. Lately I have changed. One can’t look at the sun and not go blind; and I have looked at a light that is far brighter than that of a thousand suns. . . .

“I remained in Domremy through July. The storm lasted all that week and half of the next, as if, truly, God were angry with the world. For the most part we stayed indoors around the kitchen fire, but Père Leblanc had chores to do about his farm and every day Jeanne would go out in the rain to see how the sheep were faring. Oh, yes—she tended sheep, like Jeanne d’Arc and like them to whom the angel of the Lord came to tell of the birth in Bethlehem.

“One evening, shortly before dinner, Jeanne came into the kitchen, where I sat alone working at an article that I was writing for an

American geographical publication. Looking up, I perceived immediately that something very grave had occurred—something grave and yet, judging by the exaltation in her eyes, something very wonderful. Although she and I had become close friends by now, I hesitated to question her, for I felt—how can I describe it?—I felt that she had suddenly left me far behind and below her: she had stepped beyond the earthly boundaries that hemmed me in. Imagine two people imprisoned in the same cell, one of whom is able occasionally, through the barred windows, to obtain a glimpse of the blue sky with the sun riding across it, and the other of whom is so chained to the floor that he can never see the light except reflected in the eyes of his comrade. Do you understand what I mean? I saw the light reflected in the eyes of Jeanne Leblanc, and the sight of it awed me and held me silent.

“She crossed over beside me, sat down noiselessly, and passed a hand across her forehead. Without having looked at me she knew I was there, and, before long, she spoke.

“‘I have heard the Voices again,’ she said. ‘They came to me again in the garden—just now—St. Michael and St. Catherine—the one to warn and the other to comfort me.’

“She paused, breathing rapidly, and her hand strayed down to her breast, where she held it pressed against her heart.

“‘It is almost over,’ she said in a whisper.

‘There is but a short month left me—and yet it will be very glorious to die. Yes, I must remember that—it is very glorious to die in order that one may live forever.’

“‘Jeanne—my little Jeannot,’ I faltered—‘you must not think such things. You are not going to die!’

“‘I was really frightened, you see—I was frightened because I believed that she was speaking the truth. And she, knowing that she was speaking the truth, was frightened, too, I think, for a little while; but it was the last time that I or any one else ever saw fear in her eyes.

“‘I have thirty-four days to live,’ she said. ‘Within thirty-four days I shall encounter blood, iron, and fire—and at the end I shall wear a martyr’s crown. Sweet Lord, grant that I may wear it bravely and without flinching!’

“Then she fell silent; and I went over to her and knelt by her chair and took her hand.

“‘Jeanne,’ I said, ‘do you mean that there will be war?’—for, you see, even then, toward the end of July, there were but few that suspected what the first day of August would bring.

“She nodded without speaking, but I felt her fingers cold and trembling in mine. Suddenly she slipped to her knees, clasped her hands together, and closed her eyes. I knew that she was praying.

“When she had finished she kissed her cruci-

fix and murmured: '*Ta volonté soit faite.*' Then she got to her feet and turned to face me, her head thrown back, her lips steady, her eyes serene.

" 'Now,' said she, 'I have been given strength. God is good to his servant.' "

At this point Barclay paused and regarded me searchingly, as if striving to read my mental attitude in my face. To tell the truth, his story had carried me along with it, and I believed every word that he had said as implicitly as he, himself. Besides, Barclay is not prone to exaggeration—rather the contrary, in fact.

"Do you think you are listening to a lunatic?" he said sharply. "If you do, just say so and I'll quit talking immediately. Understand, I'm not trying to make a convert out of you; but if you don't believe that I am telling the truth I'd rather not go on."

"Don't be ridiculous," I answered— "I *do* believe that you're telling the truth. So please go on."

"You're not bored and cynical?"

"No," I said; "go on."

Apparently satisfied as to my willingness to listen in the proper frame of mind, he consented to proceed. I doubt very much if he would have told the tale to an incredulous scoffer.

"I don't intend," he said, "to give you in detail the rest of my conversation with Jeanne Leblanc. All that she prophesied to me that afternoon is now history; but, unfortunately,

I am the only witness that can testify to the fact that all that came to pass she had foretold. For example, however, she said that her Voices had warned her of the first of August, the day on which the rain of blood was to begin—and of the last of August, the day on which she was to die.

“Well, you yourself know—we all know now—what happened on the first day of August; and I and a few others know what happened on the last day. I wonder if the histories will mention it—I’m afraid not.

“You remember the disastrous advance of the French into Alsace-Lorraine, at the very opening of the war? You remember that they overreached themselves?—that some one high in command blundered?—that whole regiments broke in disorder and ran? Well, we in Domremy saw the advance, and we saw the retreat. You see, the war caught me at Domremy with no papers and no passports. In any case, it would have been difficult to leave, but, to tell the truth, I had no desire to leave: I wanted to stay not only because I am a war correspondent at times, but also because I had become a disciple of Jeanne Leblanc and I was unwilling to desert her before—well, before the end of August. So I stayed.

“We saw the French pass through Domremy, eager, enthusiastic, confident of success. We cheered them loudly; we cried, *‘Vive la France! Vive la République!’* and in our madness, we

cried also, '*A Berlin!*' At least, all of us did but Jeanne. She watched them march by with tears in her eyes, and occasionally she would stop some young boy, scarcely in his twenties, and kiss him on both cheeks and whisper, '*Soyez fort!*' Those were the boys that she knew would never return.

"There came the time when Domremy was deserted, save for the women, the children, and the old men. Père Leblanc remained, of course, being past the age of service. Each day we waited breathlessly for news of the great victory that we all felt certain would be achieved—all, that is, except Jeanne, who confided her doubts to no one but me. Her Voices had told her that the first assault on Alsace-Lorraine was destined to failure; and she added, quite simply: 'It is I who have been chosen to save it from complete disaster.'

"When I questioned her as to how this was to be brought about, she answered: 'I do not yet know: in due time it shall be revealed to me.' And she was completely confident and untroubled, except that she grieved a great deal for the boys who were to lay down their lives for their beautiful France. She gave not a second thought to her own life—that was to be disposed of and sacrificed as God willed.

"When the retreat began, it seemed at first unbelievable. It was impossible that the French army that had gone out so confidently should be so quickly and decisively repulsed. It must be

a mistake. Well, of course it was a mistake—but the army retreated, nevertheless, and in some disorder. Although the news of it travelled fast, it was not believed until the ambulances began to pass through Domremy, bearing the wounded away from the lines. Even then we did not learn the worst, for naturally the men were not inclined to be very communicative—rather, they were furtive and sullen and a little ashamed. Most of them had been perfectly willing to throw away their lives that a victory might be achieved, and they were dazed to discover that they had shed their blood to no purpose. But there were many who lay across the frontier, unburied and unhonored—and they, at least, were spared the sting of defeat.

“There is no need of my going deeply into the strategy of the retreat. For one reason, I am unable to judge of it, since I gained all of my information second-hand from the soldiers themselves; and soldiers never know why they advance or why they retreat. At any rate, the general in command, in order to save two entire divisions, left behind a small rear-guard to delay the pursuit as much as possible. Perhaps the rear-guard did not know it, but they were simply a sop thrown to the enemy. A few were left to be slain in order that a great many might live to slay. That is war.

“The rear-guard had some pieces of light artillery and some machine guns, and they worked

them industriously; but, naturally enough, they were forced to give ground—slowly, village by village, hill by hill; and every village that they left became a black, bleak ruin, and on every hill that they left the grass grew red. That, too, is war.

“Long before they crossed the frontier we had been warned to leave Domremy. But we did not leave—that is, not until later. Jeanne would not hear of it, and I, of course, knew why. However, we did our utmost to induce Père Leblanc to join one of the neighbors who offered him a seat in his cart; but the old man, too, was obstinate and insisted on remaining with his daughter.

“‘I am old,’ he said—‘why put off the day? I will stay with Jeannot.’

“And so on the twentieth day of August there remained scarcely a dozen people in the village—among them an old man, a young girl, and an alien.

“All morning we sat and listened to the booming of the guns—heard it grow louder and more spiteful—but in the village there was no sound except that of the dogs barking and whining in the empty streets.

“At noon Jeanne went alone into the garden. When she had gone, Père Leblanc looked at me and shook his head sadly.

“‘Her Voices again,’ he said. ‘Always I know by the look in her eyes. Ah, m’sieu’, I am afraid for her—if anything should happen to

me, who will be left to care for little Jeannot?"

"I went to him and laid my hand on his shoulder.

"If anything should happen to you, Père Leblanc,' I said, 'I swear to you that I will be with Jeannot to the end.'

"The tears came into his dim eyes as he turned to thank me; but, God knows, I had promised little enough.

"When Jeanne returned to the house, I knew at once that the great moment had come. First she knelt at her father's feet to ask for his blessing; then she kissed him on both cheeks and bade him good-by.

" 'The time has come,' she said quietly; 'They need me and I am going to them.'

"Now, it happened that there were two horses left on Père Leblanc's farm—two horses that had not been commandeered for the army—a roan horse and a white one. Jeanne, of course, chose the white one—how could it have been otherwise?—and she buckled Père Leblanc's sword about her waist. It was her only accoutrement of war, and I doubt if even it had seen service. At any rate, it was so rusty from years of idleness that I was amazed that Jeanne was able to draw it from its sheath.

"When I had helped her saddle the white horse, I turned to the roan. She watched me intently, saying nothing until I had mounted and moved up beside her. Then:

" 'I knew you would come with me,' she said.

" 'Of course,' I answered.

" 'I shall not keep you long, and no harm shall come to you—nor to my father. That much the Voices have promised me.'

" 'Where do we go?' I asked.

" 'To Saint-Nicolas-du-Port. It is about thirty miles—not far from Nancy.'

" 'Very well,' I said, 'I am ready.'

"We rode all that afternoon—a strange couple, no doubt, and one that in times less strange would have attracted more attention; for while thousands of men, women, and children were traveling in the opposite direction, we were the only people going to the east—into the teeth of the victorious German army. Many times we were warned to turn back, and as many times Jeanne smiled and shook her head. There were harrowing sights on the road, sights from which I averted my eyes, but which Jeanne bore unflinchingly.

" 'It but makes my own life seem of less account,' she said once—'and my death the more necessary.'

Toward evening a French officer challenged us, ordering us back. He informed us that women were not wanted on the firing lines, and he looked at me and my civilian clothes with suspicion.

"Jeanne answered and said: 'Where men are suffering, women are always needed. I am going to take a little of their suffering onto myself. It is God's will.'

"The officer stared—I saw him hesitate, waver, and acquiesce—and then he saluted her and said: 'Go—and God keep you.'

"Later in the night, men were too busy with their own affairs to notice us, or if they did they put us down for peasants returning in a mad attempt to save some of our belongings. And shortly before dawn we reached Saint-Nicolas-du-Port, where the ground was rocking under our feet, and our voices were drowned in the thundering of the cannon.

"We slept in a field outside the village—that is, we lay on the ground and tried to sleep; but, tired as I was, I could not, and I think that Jeanne stayed awake to pray.

"The sun came up, red behind the smoke, glowing like a devil's eye; and it looked upon a devil's day.

"Jeanne and I arose, stretched our stiff limbs, and left the field for the village.

"Now, it happened that the rear-guard which I have mentioned were making a desperate stand about four miles east of Saint-Nicolas-du-Port, their idea being, of course, that the Meurthe, on which the village is situated, would prove a safeguard for their own retreat by providing an obstacle for the enemy's advance. Bridges can always be dynamited, and pontoons take time to construct.

"But early that morning the enemy, pursuing their overnight advantage, drove the French from their trenches and hurled them back, in

disorder and almost surrounded, into Saint-Nicolas. It was a dull-eyed, crumpled-up handful of men that we came upon, there in the village—five hundred that had once been five thousand, and half of them bleeding from undressed wounds, and all of them so exhausted that death would have seemed to them a blessed relief.

“When they saw Jeanne, cool and white and calm, on her white horse, they looked on her as on a vision. I am sure that some of them did not know whether she was flesh and blood, or whether she was a figure in some dream born of their feverish, tired brains. They parted their ill-formed ranks in the street to let her ride through; but when she was in the middle of them, she halted, drew the rusty old sword, and swung it over her head.

“*“Courage, mes enfants!”* she cried. ‘Be strong for the glory of France and the glory of God!’

“They turned and tried to cheer; and some of them passed their hands across their eyes vaguely, as if to clear their sight.

“Then, briefly, Jeanne told them that she had been sent by *le bon Dieu* to rally them and to lead them—that they must not be afraid to die—that death in a just cause is sweet—that God cared for them and would remember.

“They listened in absolute silence until she had finished, and then—and then—well, they recognized her, or at least they recognized the

spirit that animated her, for they cried out: 'Jeanne d'Arc! Jeanne, the Maid!' And a young lieutenant, the only officer left to them, swung around and put his horse beside hers and shouted: 'Let us all die, but let not the Germans cross the Meurthe!'

"So, while the *sapeurs* were sent to dynamite the bridges, Jeanne rode out at the head of five hundred men to hold the Germans back until the work should be accomplished, and every one of the five hundred knew that with the bridges went their only hope of retreat.

"They went out, the five hundred of them—and a few of them came back, fighting through the streets, from house to house. When they were driven back to the square in front of the town hall they set up a machine gun and played it like a hose on the close-massed enemy; and when they could no longer work the gun, they retreated into the town hall itself and fought from the doors and the windows and the balcony. And always Jeanne was with them, unscathed, but fighting now on foot, for the white horse had fallen under her. I could see the dying reaching out piteous, adoring hands to touch her skirt before they should die; and I could see the wounded, smiling at her as they fell. The young lieutenant stood by the machine gun to the end, operating it with his left arm, for his right hung limp by his side. And then suddenly he was struck in the head and went down in her arms. I saw her make a sign of

the cross on his breast, I saw her lips move as she whispered something to him, and I saw him try to smile as he died in her arms.

"Then I was hit and for a few minutes I remembered no more. When I came to myself I was lying in a doorway, across the square from the town hall. Doubtless it was thought that I was dead, and no one had wasted the time to bayonet me in order to make certain.

"Crawling out painfully to the sidewalk I perceived that the enemy were still encountering some resistance; and just then, from the river, I heard two great booming crashes and I suspected that the bridges had been dynamited.

"In the square the bursting shells, or the Germans' torches, had set fire to the town hall, and it was now a roaring, billowing sheet of flame. But from the upper window occasional shots spat out, and here and there a German soldier fell quickly and quietly to the ground. I wondered if Jeanne was still in there, or if, already, she had accomplished her destiny.

"And suddenly I wondered no longer, for she appeared on the balcony, in full view of the entire square. She stood there, in Madonna blue, a crucifix raised up before her eyes, the flames licking hungrily at her feet. Almost I saw a halo about her head—I think I did—I am not sure. Perhaps it was the yellow fire behind her; perhaps it was the gold of her hair.

"Ah, she was very beautiful as she stood

there with the light in her eyes of one who sees God. She was very beautiful, and she was very brave—a woman among a thousand men, a saint among a thousand sinners. As I looked I found that the tears were on my cheeks, and then, presently, I staggered to my knees and began to pray as well as I could.

“There came a sudden silence over the square—a strange, awed silence. Men looked at one another, wonderingly, questioningly, ill at ease, and receiving no answer, their eyes returned to the lonely figure of Jeanne, standing high above them on the balcony, swathed in flames.

“She made no outcry; she scarcely moved, except once or twice when I saw her press her lips to the crucifix. At a word from an officer the men surged back a little from the heat. The officer himself was moving restlessly about the square, uncertain what to do, now that the worst was done. I don’t think he relished the responsibility of burning a woman alive; or perhaps he too was not sure whether it was a woman or a saint. However, he evidently thought it best to stay and see the business out.

“It was now merely a question of minutes. The front wall of the town hall was shivering, tottering, and through the windows we could see that the interior was red with flame, shot through with black smoke. The crowd edged away yet a few steps farther; but they kept their faces turned to the balcony.

"Suddenly it was over. There came a leaping yellow spurt of fire, a swirling shroud of smoke, and with a crash of falling bricks the wall fell in. It was as if a child had swept down his building-blocks with a blow of his hand.

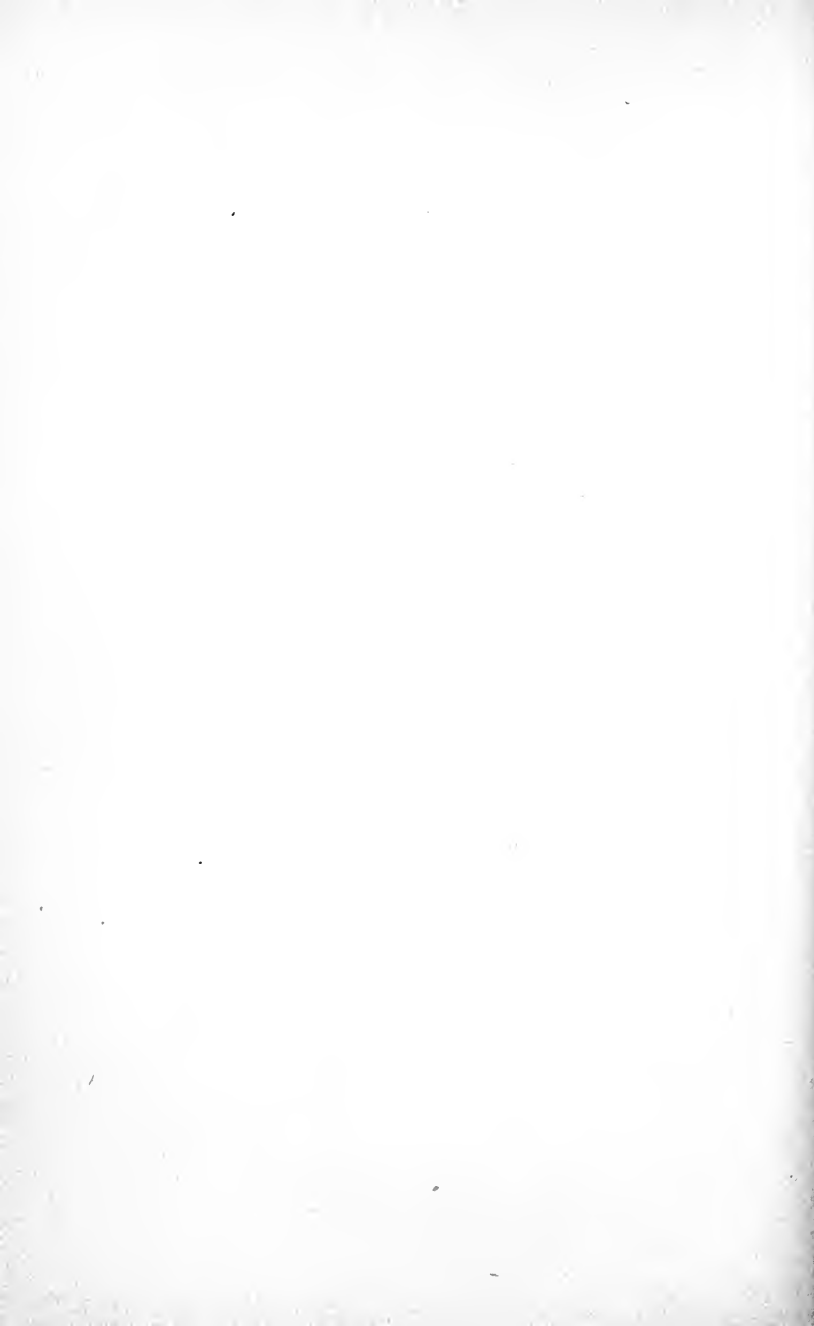
"I remember, then, that somehow or other I got to my feet and cried, 'Jeanne!' and I think that through all that mad confusion of sound I heard a voice—a voice that rang as clearly and confidently as a bugle—calling: '*Pour Dieu et la patrie!*'"

Barclay stopped and put his face in his hands.

"It was a glorious death," I ventured gently.

He did not answer at once. Then he said gravely: "Yes, it was a glorious death; but, for her, I believe that it was the beginning of a glorious life. She rests with the saints from her labors."

EVERY MOVE



EVERY MOVE

A FAT old woman in a black apron emerged from the shadows of the chestnut-trees in the Avenue des Champs-Élysées, and began to set in ordered line the chairs that had been huddled together, like timid animals seeking warmth, during the cool hours of the night. It was seven o'clock of a May morning in Paris. Will some joyous chemist never distil the essence of it, bottle it, and distribute it gratis as an antitoxin for melancholy?

The old woman may have entertained some similar thought; for, as she worked, she hummed uncertainly a pleasant little spring song:

Le lendemain elle était souriante,
A sa fenêtre fleurie; chaque soir
Elle arrosait ses petites fleurs grimpantes
Avec de l'eau de son arrosoir.

When her task was fairly accomplished, and the chairs aligned like so many stiff hussars, she allowed her gaze to wander beyond the immediate foreground. She noted, with the quick disapproval of an order-loving mind, that the gravel of the walk was sprinkled with cream-colored blossoms from the chestnut-trees overhead. She weighed for an instant the possibil-

ities of a cleansing broom, but a Latin sense of poetry checked her hand. To such an extent did she react that thereafter she was careful not to crush a single blossom, as she moved about on her clumsy, comical feet.

In the middle of the avenue, by the Rond-Point, a grizzled old man was watering the road. Behind him, progressing reluctantly on rollers, snaked fifty yards of rubber hose. Facing the Tuileries he hurled prismatic showers of spray into the very teeth of the morning sun.

The old woman greeted his approach cheerfully.

"Variety of sausage, hast thou not enough stirred up the dust for one day?"

"*Hé, la belle,*" he answered; "go seat thyself on thy chairs at two sous the day!"

"Thou talkest," she retorted with a grin.

As he stopped by the curb he turned some mysterious spigot in such a way that the jet of spray folded itself up like a fan and, subsiding into a single ugly stream, ran disregarded down the gutter.

The old man crooked a bent thumb over the shoulder of his blouse.

"There is one up there by the Rond-Point," he said darkly, "who takes money from thy pockets. He is sitting on a *bench*. What thinkest thou of that, my little one—on a *bench*! Also, he has not moved from that bench all the night. That vexes thee, hein?—when he should be renting a chair of thee."

"The camel!" she exclaimed. "I will occupy myself with him."

"Take care; he has the beauty of a devil."

"So much the worse for the devil. He shall sit in one of my chairs if he be Fallières himself."

With this reflection on the president of her republic she hurried away to seek out the offender.

She found him, as the old man of the hose had said, occupying a bench at the Rond-Point. That he was either asleep or in misery was obvious, for his body was twisted up sideways on the bench in a position that no rational, wholly conscious person would wilfully assume, and his arms, hanging limply over the back of the seat, served as a precarious pillow for his head.

The old woman eyed him in doubt. She knew him at once for a gentleman: a tramp would have arranged himself more comfortably and would have made use of his coat for bedding. Besides, his hair was cut very short and it was black, and it curled in a manner distinctly patrician. A shrewd judge of social strata was the old woman.

A closer inspection revealed him an Anglo-Saxon; he was smooth-shaven; his shoes were well shaped; he was broad of shoulder and narrow of waist; his trousers were turned up as though they had been and always would be, and

there was unmistakable breeding in the knot of his cravat.

Noting the tired, pathetic lines on his face, she resolved not to disturb him, and was in the act of turning away when he stirred and sat upright.

He looked about him, dazed, gave a hollow laugh, felt through his pockets anxiously and swore softly and with perfect resignation. The old woman moved up in front of him and, standing with her hands on her hips, addressed him in a friendly fashion.

"Monsieur has not need of a chair?—it would be more comfortable, and at two sous a day—" Her gesture hinted that two sous was a sum not to be mentioned between gentlemen and ladies.

But he shook his head and forced a crooked smile.

"I haven't enough to hire a chair for five minutes," he said in correct, careful French. "Otherwise I should not have chosen this bench for a night's rest. It is hard as charity—or is it 'cold as charity' that one should say?"

The old woman pleaded ignorance of the appropriate adjective; but, scenting mystery, she commenced to catechise.

"Monsieur says that he has passed the night on this bench? Poor monsieur! It is scandalous!"

"Is it not?" he agreed.

"And monsieur has no money?"

"Not a cent."

"Monsieur has been robbed, then?"

"Yes," he answered; "monsieur has been robbed. A porter at the Gare du Nord took all my coppers, a taxi-auto to my hotel took all my silver, and two bottles of champagne at the Café de Paris took my gold."

"And the bank-notes?"

"Oh, the bank-notes were taken without my consent. In their case I cannot put my finger on the thief; but should you ask me to guess, why, then, I might inform you that there was a lovely lady dressed all in salmon pink with whom I waltzed at the Bal des Coryphées last night, up there by the Place Pigalle. I recollect that she pinned a white carnation on my lapel, and was agreeably slow about it. Then, when I looked for her later——"

"She had gone!" finished the old woman.

"Exactly; and she doubtless is using seven five-hundred franc notes for curl-papers at the present moment."

"The cow!" ejaculated the old woman coarsely. "But monsieur can get no money from the bankers? Monsieur has no friends in Paris? Monsieur cannot borrow from his hotel?"

The young man smiled.

"I know no one in Paris," he explained. "As for my hotel, they are more likely to attach my baggage than to advance me a louis. But I am keeping you. If I am not mistaken those

two gentlemen are contemplating your chairs with a view to sitting on them."

The woman turned to follow his gaze.

"That," she explained, "is Monsieur Vilbert—very rich—an old client of mine. He is the little thin one with the gray mustache brushed like William's."

"Like William's?"

"Yes, like that of William the German. I will go to bid him good morning. I know him well; but his friend, the big one, I do not remember to have seen before. It must be that he does not sit often in the Champs-Élysées."

Left to himself, the young man stretched and rose to his feet. He slapped the dust out of his clothes and shook his coat viciously in a vain endeavor to smooth the wrinkles from it. A night on a bench in the open air is a poor valet.

As he stooped for his straw hat, which he had placed under the bench, he heard footsteps on the gravel behind him. He turned, hat in hand, to see Monsieur Vilbert and his friend standing at his elbow. Monsieur Vilbert inspected him critically, head to one side, thumbs resting in the upper pockets of his waistcoat, dapper little feet turned out at right angles. Monsieur Vilbert's friend inspected him ruminatively, sharp eyes narrowed to slits in his round, red face, fat white hands clasped across a convex abdomen, patent-leather feet planted far apart.

Then Monsieur Vilbert looked at his friend

and they both nodded; and Monsieur Vilbert gave a nervous, energetic twist to his gray mustache, and his friend drew a sleek hand across his smooth-shaven chin. And Monsieur Vilbert spoke in French.

"What a beautiful morning!" is what he said.

The young man regarded one and then the other, puzzled, surprised, not certain that he was pleased.

"Yes," he answered finally, "one cannot complain of it."

The two Frenchmen appeared to ponder the words as though they had been sibylline. Then they nodded once more, *omine fausto*.

"Monsieur," said Vilbert, "my friend, the lady who rents the chairs, informs me that you are a stranger here in Paris and that you—that you have not been made to feel at home; in short, that you have been robbed. Pardon the brutality of the word, will you not?"

"But certainly," replied the young man.

"Good!" said Vilbert.

"Good!" echoed his friend.

"And now," continued Vilbert, "I pray you to permit me to present myself. I am called Etienne Vilbert, and this is my friend and associate, Monsieur Hippolyte Dieudonné."

They bowed graciously, and the young man could do no less.

"I am overcome," he said.

"You have not heard the names before?" asked Vilbert, it seemed a little anxiously.

"You must forgive me," answered the young man, "if I admit that I have not. I come from America, and we Americans know very little of your country and even less of its great men. Nevertheless I repeat that I am honored, and I beg to give you my name in return. I am called Austin Waide."

"Well, then, Monsieur Waide," said Vilbert briskly, when he and Dieudonné had duly bowed once more and murmured their enchantment, "if you will do us the honor of breakfasting with us I have no doubt but that we shall be able to put before you a proposition that will be of advantage to all of us. Do you accept, monsieur?"

Austin laughed.

"I certainly accept the breakfast," said he; "and as for the proposition—why, I am willing to do anything short of a crime to earn my living."

"We contemplate nothing criminal," Dieudonné assured him. "However, the work may be exciting and not unconnected with danger——"

He caught Vilbert's eye and stopped abruptly. Vilbert hailed an open cab and they drove out of the Avenue du Bois to the Pré Catelan. There, under the trees in front of the dairy, they breakfasted deliciously on fresh eggs and milk and wild strawberries.

When they had finished, Vilbert pushed back his iron chair and offered a brand of gov-

ernment cigarettes from a small mauve package.

"I patronize home industries," he remarked. "Perhaps you, Dieudonné, would prefer something more Oriental, with a Turkish name and a sensuous box."

Then he turned directly to Austin.

"Monsieur," he said, "you are young, handsome, well-built, athletic, like the majority of your countrymen. Like the majority of your countrymen, too, I take it that you are not afraid of danger."

"I have never wilfully avoided it," answered Austin, smiling.

"Good!" said Vilbert.

"Good!" said Dieudonné.

"I think we can use you," Vilbert continued. "The hours will be short; you will be released to-night in time for your *apéritif*, and the salary will be anywhere from one hundred francs to five hundred, depending entirely on the way you acquit yourself and the success of what, for us, is something of an experiment. Have I made myself understood? If so, I await your answer."

"One moment," said Austin. "I understand that you offer me from twenty to one hundred dollars for one day's work. Can you give me no more definite idea of the character of the work?"

Vilbert looked at his associate and they both shook their heads.

"No, monsieur," answered Dieudonné firmly, "that is one of the conditions: a blissful ignorance on your part is indispensable to our success. We may but give you a hint: be surprised at nothing; behave as a gentleman should, and,—well, do not be afraid to defend yourself as well as you are able. Moreover, *la boxe Anglaise* is renowned; need I say more?"

"Need we say more?" echoed Vilbert dryly, tossing away his cigarette and rising. "And so, Monsieur Waide, if you say 'yes,' you will accompany us back to Paris in a taxi-auto; if you say 'no,' we part regretfully, enchanted, however, to have had the pleasure of your society at our little breakfast."

"No bouquets," said Austin with a laugh. "I say 'yes.'"

"Good!" cried Vilbert.

"Good!" cried Dieudonné.

They paid their bill and walked through the *vacherie*, Dieudonné patting the sleek, fat cows and throwing bits of paper at the voracious goats. He was as amused as a child. Vilbert, however, serious and impatient, plucked at his arm, urging him to be off.

As they drove back through the Bois, the sun was well up in the sky, and the roads and bridle-paths had assumed the animation that is bred in Paris of a May morning. Wonderfully equipped cavaliers, dressed in amazing English breeches and coats, cantered dashingly but uncertainly at the sides of their *amazones*, as the

French term them. Buxom *nounous*, with broad ribbons fluttering from their caps, were out already with their perambulators, airing the children of the rich and keeping furtive eyes out for picturesque zouaves or gallant guardsmen. In France it is not the police who distract the nursemaids, but the army.

Conversation between the three men in the taxi flagged. Dieudonné, making several half-hearted attempts at Gallic wit, subsided quickly under Vilbert's severe frown. Austin was calm, indifferent, almost bored. He was beginning to doubt the sanity of the two Frenchmen; but then—he had always been brought up to doubt the sanity of all Frenchmen. There still persists a class in America to whom a Frenchman is a crazy person who eats frogs and snails and who wears an imperial.

Vilbert, leaning from the window at intervals, directed the course. They rounded the arch at the Place de l'Etoile and turned down the Champs-Élysées. At the Place de la Concorde they took the Rue Royale to the Madeleine, and then, to the right on the Boulevard as far as the Opera House. Here they swung across into the Boulevard Haussmann and followed it to its inception. They took the last street on their left and stopped at the house next to the *bureau de poste*.

Vilbert, who had given the driver a gold piece before the taxi drew up at the curb, grasped Austin sharply by the arm and hurried

him through a high, dark entrance, the heavy, wooden doors of which stood open. Austin caught a glimpse of a somber courtyard beyond, paved with stone and decorated with dwarf trees in green pots. Then he was led to the right through a glass door into a large hall. While they waited in front of an elevator-shaft he had time to look about him.

The hall was panelled in mahogany halfway up to the ceiling, and the ceiling, Austin calculated, was nearly twenty feet high. Above the panelling hung rich, soft tapestries, illuminated dimly by clusters of heavily shaded electric lights. At intervals stood gorgeous, barbaric suits of mail, erect and uncannily alive. Fastened to the panels were inlaid shields and swords and graceful lances, all beautifully wrought—the plunder of a mediæval court. The floor was marble-paved, in squares of black and white, and carved marble benches stood in the corners.

Somehow, in spite of the insignia of war, it gave to Austin the impression of a cathedral of the Middle Ages—some chapel, perhaps, designed for a crusader's tomb, filled with the arms by which he had sought to hew his way to salvation. It lacked but the odor of incense and the religious light of a stained window to complete the illusion.

The lift, which had been descending silently and slowly, untenanted, and propelled by some unseen hand on some unseen button, now

reached the ground with a muffled click and a sigh of relief. The two Frenchmen motioned to Austin to enter. When they had followed him, so small was the space within that it was with difficulty that they could close the doors.

Then Vilbert touched the topmost of eight ivory buttons on a panel, and the tiny compartment hesitated, wheezed, and began once more its laborious motion upward, silently as before, save for the dull click at each landing.

"Remember," warned Vilbert earnestly, "you are expected to do exactly as you are bidden and to ask no questions. It is possible that some things may seem to you—how shall I say it?—bizarre, extravagant. But it is not for you to question our methods. If you conduct yourself satisfactorily to us your reward shall be satisfactory to you."

"Very well," answered Austin cheerfully, "I am prepared for the worst."

"Good!" said Vilbert.

"Good!" said Dieudonné.

Austin counted six landings and the lift stopped abruptly at the seventh. Vilbert led the way down a long corridor, flanked by numerous doors, all closely shut. There was no window in the corridor, but it was lighted at intervals by yellow electric lights. The bareness of its walls and ceiling and the multiplicity of its doors tended to accentuate its length. It might almost have been the corridor of some huge jail.

Austin fancied that he heard voices behind some of the doors; but he was hurried along so peremptorily that he could not be certain, and the three pairs of feet, echoing loudly on the stone floor beneath them, drowned all minor sounds.

At a door numbered 113 they paused, and Vilbert, drawing a pass key from his pocket, turned the lock and entered the room. Dieudonné and Austin followed.

It was a small rectangular room, uninteresting, banal. White plaster walls and ceiling, a high, small window framing a patch of blue sky, a long wooden bench, a row of hooks on the wall, and a full-length mirror swinging in a wooden frame. Nothing more.

"Wait here," commanded Vilbert briefly, and pointed to the bench. Then he turned to Dieudonné, beckoned him to the door, and muttered directions in his ear.

"Tell Roxane we have found him, and tell her the circumstances. Warn her to be ready. I will call Luzech to come and prepare him."

Austin heard but, hearing, was none the wiser. The whole affair struck him as far-fetched, unduly mysterious. If there was danger to be encountered, why did they not point out the danger and bid him face it? They were behaving, to his eyes, like opera-bouffe conspirators. They needed but masks and dark lanterns and low music.

When they had left him he noted that they

closed the door and that the lock snapped back at its closing. He shrugged his broad shoulders and listened patiently to the sound of their feet diminishing in the distance down the corridor.

Walking listlessly over to the window, he looked out, his chin on the level with the sill. From that position he could see nothing save the mansard roofs of houses several blocks away and, over on the right and beyond, the slender line of the Eiffel Tower, bayoneting the blue sky.

"An excellent bird's-eye view of Paris," he remarked. "It would look well on a post-card to send home to Kansas City. But the room has none of the modern conveniences; I doubt if I stay long."

He sat down on the low bench and studied his shoes and his finger-nails. Still no interruption occurred. The silence became annoying and, for the first time that day, he lost his perfect serenity. He felt through his pockets for a cigarette, found none, and, resorting finally to that manifestation of impatience to which all caged beasts come sooner or later, he paced the room from corner to corner, from wall to wall.

Some one must have come noiselessly up the corridor, for of a sudden he heard the lock snap and his door opened inward. He turned and, instinctively on the defensive, put his back to the wall. What he saw in the doorway startled him for an instant; and then he smiled

appreciatively. It was too good to be true: it smacked of the "Arabian Nights."

A huge figure blocked the doorway: a man as black and as shiny as hard coal; and he was naked to his waist. On his head was a fantastic, turbanlike affair; in his ears hung two golden crescent rings, and about his loins was wrapped a leopard skin, rather worn and frayed. His feet and legs were as bare as his broad black chest, and his arms were decorated only with gold bracelets, an inch wide.

Over one arm, however, hung a pile of wonderfully colored fabrics, all purples and scarlets and greens and blues, embroidered with jewels and gold. Advancing gravely into the room, he laid them on the bench, and Austin perceived that they constituted a man's garments—the garments, possibly, of an Eastern prince.

The black bowed low with arms outstretched, his features set stolidly, unresponsive to Austin's frank smile. Then he pointed to the garments with a wave of his hand and indicated that Austin was to clothe himself in them forthwith.

"Very well, my good Nubian," agreed the American; "your wish is my law."

He examined the apparel with interest and amusement. A pair of gold slippers, pointed and turned up at the toes in a curve like the volutes of an Ionic capital; close-fitting scarlet tights with jeweled garters to clasp about them below the knee; a wonderful purple cloak that

hung loosely to the thighs and was edged with ermine at the collar and around the wide sleeves and was embroidered gorgeously with gold in strange Oriental designs; a broad scarlet girdle to bind it at the waist, heavy with jewels and tasselled with gold rope, and, finally, a close-fitting turban, clasped at the forehead with a huge purple amethyst.

Slowly and wonderingly Austin got out of his own clothes, and slowly and wonderingly, with the aid of the silent Nubian, got into this finery of the East.

Once dressed, he surveyed himself, not without approval, in the tall mirror. His dark complexion, he noted, lent itself remarkably well to the costume: he was every inch a Persian, if, indeed, that was what the costume intended him to be.

Drawing himself up to his greatest height he found that he was able to look the giant Nubian fairly in the eyes. This pleased him, filled him with a subtle satisfaction. So with all of his national audacity he slapped himself soundly on the chest and grinned and cried: "Behold the great Persian lamb! Now bring on your Scheherazades—all there are in the harem!"

The black regarded him gravely, almost pityingly, and maintained an ominous silence; but he bowed low and led the way through the door.

Standing in the corridor was Vilbert, nerv-

ously twisting the pointed ends of his mustache into spirals. At sight of Austin, arrayed in glory, he nodded and gave a short grunt of satisfaction.

"Good!" he said.

Dieudonné was not present to echo the monosyllable.

The little Frenchman, slipping his arm through Austin's, led him slowly down the corridor. The Nubian followed, mute, behind them.

"My friend," said Vilbert huskily, "it now depends but on you. I have done all that I can to make you a success. I may do no more. Remember, keep your head cool and your hands ready and your muscles supple. Fight, if you must; and if you fight, fight well. Meanwhile, do as you are told. It is possible that I shall be watching you; in which case pretend that we have never met. It will be better so. *Au revoir*. I shake your hand and I wish you all success."

Monsieur Vilbert, his voice unsteady with real feeling, wrung his hand as though he were sending him to his death. Austin could not but be moved by the display of emotion.

"Good-by, monsieur," he said, "and do not agitate yourself on my account. I have been in some pretty tight places before now. Have you ever tried to cross Broadway down by Herald Square during the rush hour? This business of yours is all very mysterious, of

course, but at least we are in twentieth-century Paris."

"You will not think so long," remarked Vilbert, and turned on his heel without another word.

Down the corridor the Nubian led the way, respectfully, solicitously, as one would lead an attractive lamb to the sacrifice. There seemed to be miles of corridor.

Finally, turning abruptly to the left, they came into a vaulted atrium, surrounded by glistening marble columns that supported Byzantine arches. At this point the Nubian paused and stepped aside in order that Austin might see into the hall beyond.

Austin looked and exclaimed: "My God!"

The Nubian put his finger warningly to his lips.

In front of them stretched an enormous court, crowded with restless people moving quietly backward and forward, in different directions, in and out, like a wheat-field in a shifting wind. An arched colonnade extended along the rear of this courtyard for a space of perhaps fifty yards; then it turned on itself at right angles and continued in that direction beyond Austin's range of vision from where he stood in the atrium. Many of the arch openings were closed with exquisite tapestries; others were filled with the wanton colors of tropical foliage and fruits. In two of them fountains tossed up

jets of water that hung, perpendicular in the air, like silver wands.

Over this vast courtyard, and supported by the colonnades, stretched a flat roof of white, transparent glass, set in large rectangular lights, through which the May sun poured as through the roof of some huge greenhouse, where mammoth plants were being nursed to unholy size.

At the back, near the centre of the rear colonnade, stood a dais, raised on two low, marble steps, carpeted with a rug of tawny yellow and pastel blue; and on the dais was a broad couch of cloth of gold, and on the couch, half-seated, half-reclining, languidly, sensuously, was a woman.

"My God!" repeated Austin.

Again the Nubian motioned for silence.

She was the focus of the crowd: about her the others backed and filled and circled and flew like bits of steel about a magnet. Four female slaves, their black skins shining in the heat, fanned her with long ostrich-plumes—fanned her rhythmically, monotonously, perpetually. A score of men, counterparts of Austin's Nubian, kept grim watch on either side of her throne, their hands crossed on the hilts of their naked, evil swords.

At her feet, in a semicircle, sat a dozen dancing girls, veiled to their eyes, stretching their graceful limbs on the rugs and the soft skins that covered the cold marble of the floor. As

Austin looked, one of them was dancing, her body motionless above the waist, save for the slim arms that curved and coiled, her flat palms making strange, abnormal angles with her wrists.

Beyond the circle of the dancing girls the court was bare in front of the throne; but to the right and to the left knelt a score of men and women, clad in Persian dress and beating abstractedly on brazen cymbals or on muffled tambours; and through all the dull din that they made crept another sound, a grinding, mechanical sound, like the purr of a smooth motor or the buzz of a dentist's drill.

But Austin could not keep his eyes from the woman on the couch. He had read of vampires, and he wondered if, perhaps, she was not of their breed. Her face embodied all the cruelty, all the lust, of the baneful women that have marred history. As he looked on her he shivered, and yet he was not cold; and for the first time in his life he doubted himself and his own courage.

She was dressed all in white: white, loose Turkish trousers, gathered at her ankles with pearls; white pointed slippers curving up at the toes; a broad, white girdle beneath her breasts, which held in place the thin veil that draped her narrow shoulders and which hung down to her knees, weighted with pearls. Pearls at her wrists, pearls on her long, slender fingers, pearls wound in profusion through her black hair.

Her face was unveiled. Alas, for the peace of man!

Austin looked and saw a narrow, oval face, white as paper; a broad, full mouth with lips painted dark vermilion — cruel, pitiless lips, fretting and twisting in front of small teeth that were too white and too regular to seem real. Black, straight eyebrows almost met over the thin nose and, beneath the eyebrows, black eyes gleamed and darted, restlessly, furtively, under narrow lids stained with indigo.

Austin had read of such women, had seen fantastic drawings of such women; indeed, he remembered that such a woman as this adorned the pasteboard boxes of a brand of cigarettes luringly called *Persian Favorites*. But to be face to face with such a woman, breathing the same heavy, perfumed air that she breathed—that was a different matter. It gave him a strange feeling about his heart, as though he had smoked too many of those cigarettes. He could not explain it.

Suddenly, while he watched, the dancing girl fell exhausted, her forehead on the floor in front of the dais. At a nod from the woman on the couch, two slaves lifted her in their arms and carried her away, panting and writhing, out through one of the arches of the colonnade.

Forthwith a third attendant salaamed, and, although Austin could not hear the spoken words, it was obvious from his gestures that he announced the presence of some one in the

atrium. The woman in white clapped her hands and, led by the giant Nubian, Austin marched through the crowd that made a lane for him clear to the marble steps. There the black drew away a few paces, leaving him face to face with the woman. His heart beat like a hammer while she surveyed him between her narrowed eyelids.

At length she stretched out a listless, white hand to be kissed. Under other circumstances Austin might well have grasped it heartily in his own, given it an emphatic shake, and murmured: "Glad to meet you."

But the spell being upon him, he leaned over it and kissed it gracefully enough.

The vermilion lips parted in a slow smile.

"Who may you be?" she asked in French, and her voice was low and caressing.

"My name is Austin Waide," he answered stiffly.

"And what is your business here?"

"I am afraid, madame, that I do not exactly know. I am here to find out."

"Ah," she said, still smiling, "how very interesting."

"Perhaps," said he.

"Perhaps?" she echoed. "And why 'perhaps'? If ignorance is bliss, is not doubt seven times bliss?"

"I am quite satisfied," said Austin, looking her fairly in the eyes; "only these shoes are uncomfortable."

"That shall be remedied," she answered, making a place for him beside her on the couch. "Monsieur Austin Waide shall not be compelled to stand."

He sat down as he was bidden. Strange to say, all embarrassment had left him; but he felt confidently excited, as though he had drunk champagne.

"Do you find me beautiful?" she demanded, turning on him suddenly.

Austin looked her frankly in the eyes; and *her* eyes were not frank, but the reverse. She screened them with her indigo-tinted lids and her small teeth played with her lower lip.

"Yes," he answered at length, "I find you beautiful in a certain sense of the word."

"You are half-hearted," she said, dissatisfied, "and not gallant. You are disappointing after all. But, then, you are nothing but an Anglo-Saxon that has never felt his heart beat."

She clapped her hands sharply and motioned to one of the girls lying at her feet.

"Dance!" she commanded.

The girl obeyed her, trembling. The din of the tambours throbbed, pulseline, through the court. The long fans of ostrich-plumes waved to and fro, like pendulums, in the heavy, scented air.

The woman leaned toward Austin on the couch, her eyes fixed on his. Some strange, Eastern perfume that she used stole about him and intoxicated him.

Watching his face, she read in it his agitation, and she smiled at the knowledge that she had stirred him—smiled slowly and lazily with her red lips.

"Ah," she said softly, "at last you know that your heart beats. Now, tell me, am I beautiful?"

"You are so beautiful that it hurts," he answered her, shivering. The blood rushed to his head and above the dull beating of the music he could hear his own heavy breathing and hers; and, through it all, the even rhythmical murmur, like the purr of a smooth motor or the buzz of a dentist's drill.

She laughed softly, and he put out his arms and held her closely. Her eyes came nearer to his, fixed on them, holding them. A loose strand of her hair brushed his forehead. Then he closed his eyes and kissed her on the lips.

As he did so the dancing girl fell to the ground and lay there white, motionless, exhausted. At the same time the sound of the tambours ceased, and, stifled by the silence, he opened his eyes and rose to his feet, dazed, staring stupidly about him.

There was no movement from the crowd in front of the dais. The dancing girl lay where she had fallen. Only the fans swayed up and down monotonously.

As his senses came slowly back to him, he passed his hand vaguely across his forehead. It was as though he were coming out of some

tense, realistic dream—some dream that had been so vivid that he could not yet wholly shake it off.

Then, standing, he saw that which he had not seen before. He saw, half-hidden by the screening foliage, the body of a man, sprawling, twisted and contorted, on the marble floor to the left of the dais.

The body was dressed much as he himself was dressed, and the body lay in a pool of blood. An ugly knife lay beside it, bare and crimson.

While he stood and gazed, overwhelmed, unbelieving, the woman beside him clapped her hands once more. Two giant black slaves, half-naked, their muscles rippling smoothly along their arms and backs, bowed low before her. She pointed at Austin with disdain.

"Take him away," she said, "and teach him. He sickens me; he is over-squeamish. Teach him not to draw away from my kisses as though they burnt his lips. When you have finished with him you may bring him back and throw him beside the other. Now go. Take him away!"

They rushed at him together. But he stood on the dais, two steps above them, waiting for them. And this was in his favor.

One of them he caught neatly under the chin with his left and sent him reeling back with his arms beating the air. The second grappled with him and they rocked and staggered together, up and down the step. The woman,

drawing her feet up on the couch that they might not be in the way, watched the fight with cool interest, her chin in her hands. She watched it as might a disinterested spectator who had no bet on the outcome: she approved a good blow struck or an advantage gained by either side.

In the doorway of the atrium Austin had a glimpse of Monsieur Vilbert's white face watching them eagerly. Behind him bulged the fat figure of Dieudonné, his cheeks shining with excitement.

Austin tripped his man and threw him heavily to the floor, just as the other black regained his unsteady feet. Monsieur Vilbert, in the distance, grinned sardonically and rubbed his small white hands. His lips framed the monosyllable "good."

"Good!" echoed Dieudonné, at his back.

The woman on the couch imperiously waved forward two more slaves from the waiting row. It reminded Austin grimly of Nero clamoring in the Colosseum for more lions.

"If they start using their knives it's—good-by," he muttered.

With four against him, even though two of them were somewhat crippled by previous combat, the fight became dismally unequal. They came upon him with a rush from all sides save the rear, where he was protected by the couch. He was able to deliver but one blow, and that one, being his last, was a desperate effort. He

had the satisfaction of stretching one huge, ugly giant flat on his back before they overpowered him and held his arms fast to his sides.

They manifested no gentleness then in their treatment of him; one at his head and two at his feet. The fourth lay beside the dancing girl, motionless, unheeded.

As they bore Austin away toward the atrium he had a glimpse of the woman, stretched prone on the couch, following him with her eyes. And a slow, cruel smile curled her lips. The long fans were waving quietly, rhythmically, and the only sound throughout the court was that dull murmur, like the purr of a smooth motor or the buzz of a dentist's drill.

Vilbert met them in the atrium. He was strangely excited, and all the time he was rubbing his sleek hands gloatingly together. Dieu-donné stood behind him, perspiring freely.

Once outside the court Austin was allowed to stand, the slaves holding his arms. Panting, furious, he looked back toward the dais. The woman was huddled on the couch, sobbing and shaking and wringing her hands.

Vilbert stood by the entrance, his arm upraised, waiting. Suddenly the woman sat upright, threw back her head, drew something from her girdle that flashed like a knife, and plunged it into her breast. Then she fell forward on her face.

"Now!" cried Vilbert ecstatically. "Finished!"

He clapped his hands, and the scene changed with magic rapidity. The woman on the couch raised herself slowly and began to adjust her clothing, patting her hair with delicate touches. The Nubian slave and the dancing girl, who had lain prostrate on the floor, got slowly to their feet, she smiling, laughing, chatting unconcernedly and volubly in French; he stumbling, a little stiffly, somewhat crestfallen, for Austin had put excellent force behind his last upper-cut.

And the dull noise like the purr of a smooth motor or the buzz of a dentist's drill ceased.

Vilbert turned, his face wreathed in smiles. He seized Austin in his arms and kissed him rapturously on both cheeks.

"Cut it out," said Austin disgustedly; "what in the devil do you think you are doing? Will you please tell me the joke?"

"Ha, ha!" laughed Monsieur Vilbert; "he thinks it a joke. Well, here is Roxane. She will explain the joke."

"Yes," agreed Dieudonné, "she will explain."

As he spoke, the woman from the couch came into the atrium. Vilbert, beside himself with delight, rushed to her, shrieking adjectives of approval. When she had calmed him he turned to Austin.

"Monsieur Waide," he said, "it is my great pleasure to present you to Madame Roxane Verneuil, of the Comédie Française. To-day, for the first time in her brilliant career, she has honored the firm of Vilbert and Dieudonné by

consenting to display her divine talent for a moving-picture——”

“Hush,” said she, interrupting his eloquence. “Monsieur Waide, I am enchanted to meet you on a somewhat more formal basis than just now; and may I congratulate you on your most realistic portrayal of the leading rôle of our drama without words. Realism—perfect realism! That is what we obtained by keeping you in ignorance of our purpose. I only regret that your words cannot be reproduced as well as your motions. Your fighting was magnificent, but your love-making was—well, shall I say convincing?”

“One does what one can, madame,” said Austin weakly. “It is somewhat humiliating, however, to find that, out of so many, I was, so to speak, the only goat—*le seul chèvre*.”

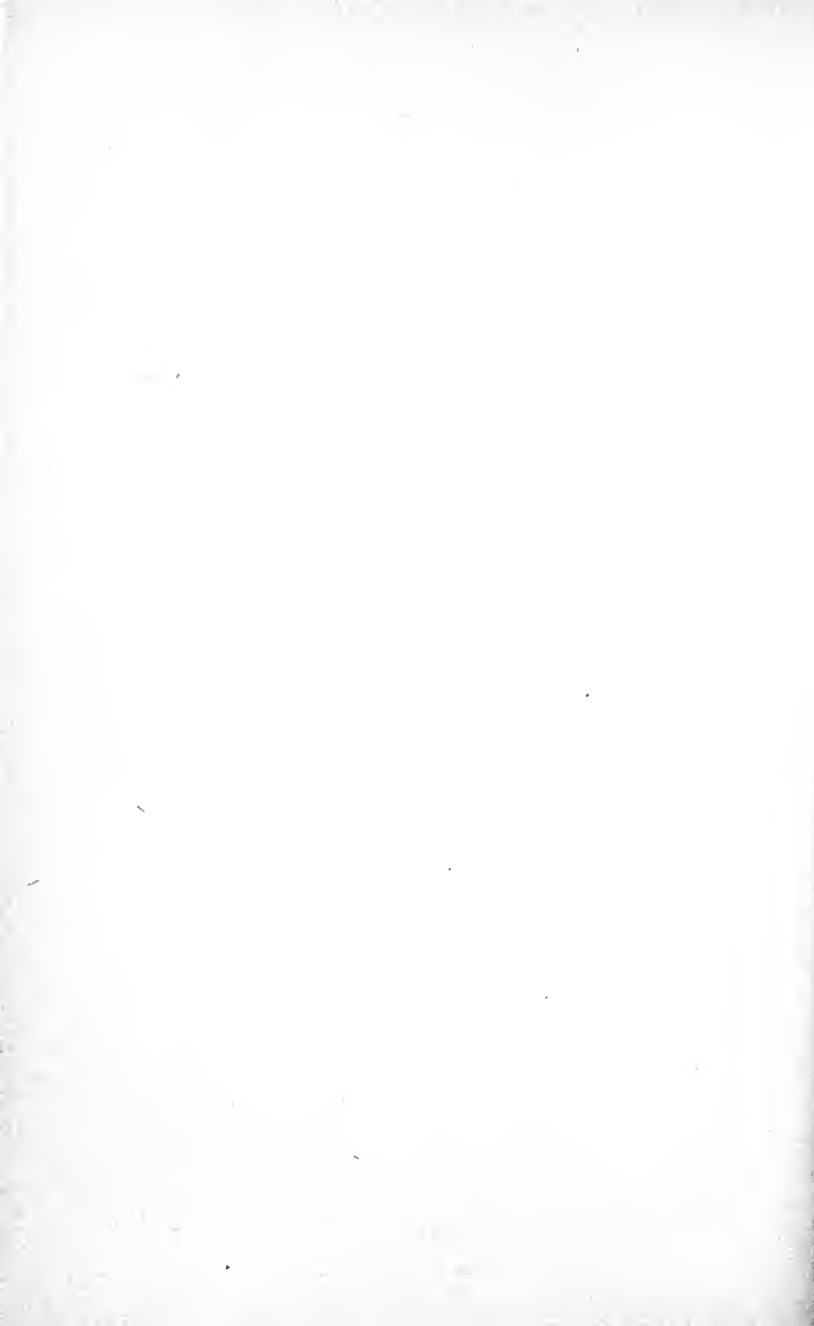
“I do not quite comprehend,” said Roxane, “but you need not be humiliated; poor Alphonse and Bernard are still nursing their chins—they who are used to rough handling, also. What shall you call the film, Monsieur Vilbert?”

“I think,” answered Monsieur Vilbert, “that I shall call it ‘Through Passion to Death.’ That should attract the American public.”

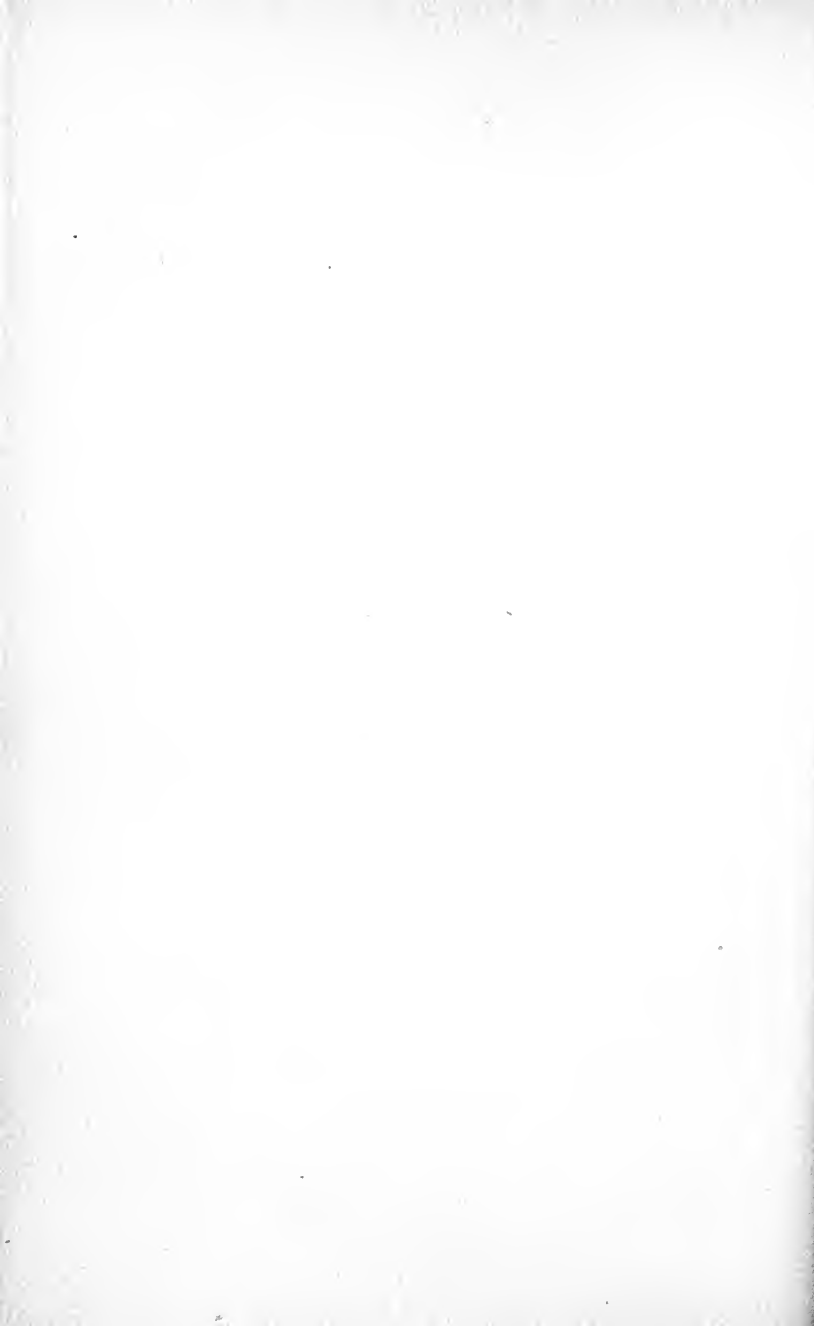
“I’m afraid,” said Austin, “that portions of my performance would fall short of that title. I only wish I might give an encore; for I am convinced that on a second trial I could do myself better justice. There was one part in particular,” he added, glancing surreptitiously at

Roxane, "that I might have improved had I not hurried it."

"Oh, I am not sure," she answered him quickly; "you did it quite well enough." And, smiling, she dabbed the rouge from her lips with her handkerchief.



LETITIA



LETITIA

I

WHEN Samuel Dent, wealthy malefactor, had, at the age of fifty-five, ground a fortune out of high-grade soap and the sweat of the poor laboring man, he sat back, rested on his laurels, and had a slight paralytic stroke. Although his doctor, a famous New York specialist called Haven, assured him that there was no immediate danger, Samuel Dent, greatly frightened, was convinced that he was about to die. With this conviction came fear; and with fear came remorse; and with remorse came a frantic clutching for spiritual salvation. He "got religion"—and in a very malignant, Presbyterian form.

Just as he had called in the best physician to heal his body, so did he now summon the best clergyman to ease his soul. The Reverend Mr. Thane had the reputation and the manner of being very influential in high circles. But the task that Samuel Dent's conscience set him to do involved not only repentance, confession, and reformation, but also material restitution; so, with this last in mind, he was forced to add his attorney, Rutherford Wilkins, to the staff of

advisers. Equipped, then, with a physician, a clergyman, and a lawyer, he seemed to be in a fair way to triumph over his offenses against nature and God and man.

The four men met in solemn conclave in Samuel Dent's high-ceilinged library on a late February afternoon. Dent himself, cadaverous and brooding, sat in a great leather armchair by the open fire. The others ranged themselves opposite him: Haven, stately, uninterested, and fingering his watch; Thane, eager, acquiescent, yet trying hard to be a man among men; Wilkins, dry, restless, disconcertingly plain-spoken.

"Gentlemen," began Samuel Dent, "thank you for coming to-day."

They made some unanimous deprecative noise at the end of which Thane's voice could be heard trailing off into: "Not at all, my dear sir, not at all."

"You, Mr. Thane" — Dent turned to the clergyman — "you know that I am a very wretched man. I am an old man and a sick man—and I am a sinful man. The health of God is not in me. But now, before it is too late, before I die, I want to lay hold of life so that when the awful day arrives I'll be able to face the Almighty Judge and say: 'Lo, I have strayed from the fold, but have mercy, for I have returned repentant!'"

Mr. Thane looked very solemn at this as if weighing the efficacy of such a plea; Doctor

Haven appeared slightly embarrassed; and Mr. Wilkins, the attorney, grunted enigmatically.

But Samuel Dent, greatly moved, continued to a climax, his voice sometimes shrill with fear, sometimes shaken with awe, sometimes, when he permitted himself a ray of hope, hushed to a tense trembling whisper. Thus might Jeremiah have spoken.

"Excuse me, Mr. Dent," ventured the doctor, "but you must not work yourself up to such a nervous pitch. I cannot allow you to proceed unless you can control yourself," and he crossed over to feel the patient's pulse. "As I thought—rapid and irregular."

"Perhaps," suggested Wilkins, "Mr. Dent will come to the point where *I* can help him. So far I see no call for my services."

But Mr. Thane said reprovingly: "Mr. Dent needs the services of all men."

"Now," said the doctor, returning to his chair, "proceed, Mr. Dent, but more calmly, and, if I may suggest it, more—er, concisely."

Samuel Dent passed a scrawny hand across his eyes as if to shut out their prophetic vision. Then he sat up erect in his chair and said, in a voice of doom: "Gentlemen, I am a married man."

This, though obviously unexpected, failed to excite any deep consternation. Mr. Thane raised sympathetic eyebrows; the doctor said, "Ah," as if he were showing his tonsils; and Wilkins remarked that he, himself, was too.

"I am a married man," repeated Samuel Dent—"that is to say, I believe I am a widower. But somewhere there is a child. God save me from the torments of hell!—there is a child."

"Steady," interposed the doctor, for Dent threatened to become again unduly excited.

"Where is the child?" demanded Wilkins, plucking up interest.

Dent shrank down into his chair and shook his head gloomily.

"I don't know," he said. "I don't know."

Wilkins drew a small leather-bound notebook from his breast-pocket, detached a gold pencil from his watch-chain, and prepared to make a memorandum.

"The child's name?" he inquired.

"Letitia," answered Dent mournfully. "We were going to call her Letty for short."

"Born?"

"Nineteen years ago."

"H'm—1893. Month and day?"

Mr. Thane held up an arm semaphorically.

"Would it not be better," he observed mildly, "for Mr. Dent to tell us the story in his own way? We ought to know exactly what his purpose is before we waste valuable time on unimportant details."

Samuel Dent started to speak, but Wilkins forestalled him.

"It is quite obvious, isn't it, what Mr. Dent's purpose is: deserted wife and young child—child named Letitia — born 1893 — mother's

maiden name so far unknown to us—mother supposedly dead. It's all quite clear, I think—or will be. Mr. Dent, of course, wishes to have his daughter traced and restored to him; isn't that so, Mr. Dent? Nothing simpler—if she's alive."

At this last Mr. Dent shuddered and gasped in his chair.

"Don't—don't," he faltered. "If she is dead, my soul is lost—condemned forever to the tortures of hell-fire—thrown into the black abyss—hurled to the red, leaping flames!"

"Easy, now," said the doctor. "Of course she's alive. We'll find her for you all right."

"We'll find her all right," agreed Wilkins, "if I may be allowed to procure some more data," and he glanced rather severely at Mr. Thane.

"Month and day?" he proceeded.

"May—I think May," answered Samuel Dent. "Yes; the 4th of May."

"Place of birth?"

"Green Lake, Montana."

"That's bad—very bad," said Wilkins. "Should have been born in a city."

"And why, pray?" inquired Mr. Thane acidly.

"Make it easier to trace her," explained Wilkins. "As it is, we can be sure of only one thing—that she is *not* at Green Lake, Montana. I dare say people are born there, but nobody

would stay there. Now, Mr. Dent, her mother's maiden name, please?"

Samuel Dent groaned.

"Lucy—Lucy Baxter," he said weakly.

"Last heard of?" The attorney was relentless.

"I read of her death fifteen years ago, in a Helena newspaper. I always take a Helena paper. I was married in Helena."

"H'm. Nothing said about the child, I suppose?"

Dent shook his head.

"H'm. Can you describe the child?"

"How can I? She was only a year old when I saw her last. You can't describe a year-old baby."

"No scar—or a birthmark, perhaps?" suggested the doctor.

"Had she been baptized?" asked Mr. Thane.

"Useless question," commented Wilkins. "Wouldn't show if she had."

"She hadn't been baptized and she had no birthmark—at least, I don't know of any," said Dent miserably. "She looked just like an ordinary baby. She had a good deal of hair—would that help? Dark hair. And—oh, yes—blue eyes."

"Useless — useless," said Wilkins. "Hair and eyes are not permanent at one year."

"Hair *never* is," murmured the doctor, who was becoming very bored.

After a few more questions, the lawyer put

away his note-book and rose to go. Samuel Dent, exhausted, lay crumpled up in the big chair, and the doctor was feeling his pulse. Mr. Thane stood by the fire, shifting from one foot to the other, reluctant to leave. He rather hoped that Dent would urge him to stay after the others had gone, for he felt that he had not appeared to very brilliant advantage in the presence of Wilkins and Doctor Haven. Besides, there was the matter of the new organ. . . .

"Good-by, Mr. Dent," said Wilkins to the pitiful figure in the chair. "We shall do everything possible with so little to go on. Advertisements in all the papers, of course—Montana papers especially. Sorry the girl didn't have a harelip or a finger missing or something like that to identify her unmistakably. Still, it can't be helped. We'll do our best. Good-day."

When the lawyer had gone, Doctor Haven rang for the valet.

"Bagby," he said, "help me get Mr. Dent up-stairs and to bed. He's had a very painful half-hour—very painful indeed. Mr. Thane, I think you had better leave us—my patient must have absolute quiet. Er—good-by; you have been of great assistance—great assistance."

Then the doctor and Bagby, the valet, carried Samuel Dent up to bed.

II

Now Bagby, the valet, occupied a peculiar position in Samuel Dent's household. When Dent had determined to sell out the soap business in Saint Louis and assault New York and Wall Street, Bagby had followed him East to take care of him. While Dent had been making money, Bagby had been making observations. He had learned how the right people dressed; what they ate, and at what hours; how they furnished their houses; what brands of automobiles they bought; what wines they drank; what oaths they used; what jewelry they permitted themselves; and what god they believed in. Thus Bagby had become a sort of social mentor to Dent—a position that made for intimacy and bred confidences. Bagby knew not whence his master derived his income, but he did know where he bought his waistcoats; he cared not whether Dent was a bull or a bear, but he saw to it that his coat-collar was of seal. And it was, metaphorically, over Bagby's dead body that Samuel Dent joined the Presbyterian Church: Bagby had had his name on the list for a pew at St. Thomas's.

Incidentally, Bagby's name was not Bagby at all—it was Ephraim Bunny. But Bagby pointed out that Bunny was no name for a gentleman's man, and it was Bagby himself that

suggested, very respectfully, that he (Bunny) be rechristened.

It followed logically, then, that Samuel Dent's fervid and unexpected attack of religion greatly upset Bagby. Obviously it was not the thing—it was plebeian, it smacked of the sudden conversions brought about by vulgar revivalists. Whenever Samuel Dent called loudly on his Lord (which was often) Bagby felt humiliated; and he blushed for his employer when he heard him screaming of hell-fire and brimstone and the black abyss and the tortures of the damned. Bagby knew that no Christian gentleman gave such things a thought.

Night after night Samuel Dent poured out the tale of his sins to Bagby.

"Think of it, Bagby," he would cry, shivering, "think of it—the wife left alone, perhaps to starve—and the baby, my little girl, my little Letitia! I turned my back on them—I listened to the voice of the Evil One, miserable sinner that I am. My soul is black—black, I tell you, Bagby, and nothing can cleanse it. Oh, if I could but make my peace with the Lord before I die!"

"I understand," Bagby would answer, busying himself with Dent's clothes—"I understand that they are not wearing four-button dress waistcoats any more, sir. I'll put these old ones of yours away, sir, if you'll allow me. And I think, sir, that I'll have to send back that colored silk underwear you ordered. No

colors, sir—leastwise not for a gentleman of your years.”

Thus Bagby endeavored discreetly to turn the painful trend of Samuel Dent's thoughts. But as time went on and there came no results from Wilkins's advertising campaign, no Letitia to soothe Dent's soul, no prospect of his securing a heavenly pardon by means of an earthly one, Bagby found that it became more and more difficult to divert his employer's harrowed mind. And Bagby became sincerely alarmed.

He intercepted Wilkins in the front hall each time the attorney came to report progress or lack of progress.

“No news from Miss Letitia, sir?” Bagby would inquire wistfully.

“Not yet.”

Then Bagby would shake his head dolorously and help Wilkins into his overcoat.

Finally, in despair, Wilkins made a flying trip to Montana, where he spent three busy days at Green Lake. During his absence Samuel Dent's condition became very precarious indeed, and Doctor Haven was in constant attendance at the bedside.

“Unless Wilkins comes back leading Letitia by the hand,” said the doctor to Bagby, “I cannot hold out much hope for Mr. Dent's life. He is worrying himself into the grave. I have always been told that religion was a comfort—a staff to lean upon. Humph! Mr. Dent's re-

ligion is killing him. The fear of hell is propelling him toward—er, heaven.”

When Wilkins returned from Montana, he summoned Doctor Haven, the Reverend Mr. Thane, and Bagby to his office; and the four of them talked for an hour behind closed doors. When they came out it was noticed that Wilkins was disturbed, Haven was insistent, Thane was expostulatory, and Bagby was more cheerful than he had been for weeks. But they all bore themselves like men who have shouldered great responsibilities.

Two days later Samuel Dent had a relapse—so serious that Doctor Haven, fearing a second stroke for him, took a room next to the patient and remained in the house constantly for seventy-two hours at the rate of fifty dollars an hour.

While the flame of Dent's life was still flickering like a candle in a draught, there came to pass an event as fortunate as it was unexpected. One afternoon Wilkins, nervous and excited, came up the front steps of the Madison Avenue house with a young girl on his arm. Thane and Haven were present in the sick-room, listening to Dent's vague rambling mutterings from the book of Lamentations; for Dent, in his wretchedness, clung to the Old Testament, feeling, doubtless, a certain kinship with the soul-racked prophets.

“‘Behold,’ ” he wailed with Jeremiah, “‘behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto

my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger. From above hath he sent fire into my bones, and it prevaileth against them: he hath spread a net for my feet, he hath turned me back: he hath made me desolate and faint all the day. The yoke of my transgressions is bound by his hand: they are wreathed and come upon my neck: he hath made my strength to fall——' ”

It was at this point that Wilkins, announced by the tremulous Bagby, entered the room. He nodded to Haven and Thane and immediately crossed over to the bed.

“Good news, Mr. Dent,” said he.

Dent stared at him vacantly.

“There can be no good news for such as me,” he groaned. “I am an outcast, a pariah, a sinner in the nethermost gloom. Woe unto me that I have sinned! I shall die and be consumed in the fires of hell—I shall——”

“If you would listen to me,” interrupted the lawyer, “you wouldn’t perhaps be so sure of those fires of hell. I tell you I have good news—I have found Letitia.”

“No!” exclaimed Haven. “You don’t say!”

“The Lord’s name be praised!” said Thane.

Samuel Dent sat up in bed; and he pointed a shaking finger at Wilkins, as if he were aiming a revolver at him.

“You aren’t fooling me, Wilkins?” he said. “You aren’t fooling me?”

"Have her up," replied Wilkins imperturbably, "and see for yourself."

"I shouldn't know her," groaned Dent. But he added eagerly: "She says she's Letitia—she remembers?"

"Ask her," recommended Wilkins.

He went to the door, opened it, and called "Bagby!"

The response was almost immediate.

"Bagby, bring up the young lady that is waiting in the hall."

There was a minute of silent suspense. You could hear the four men breathing; and Dent, with flushed face and an uncanny light in his eyes, was sitting up rigidly straight, forgetful of his weakness.

Then a girl came into the room, a little awkwardly, a little hesitatingly.

She was dressed in a dark-green suit, with some black furs at her neck and a black muff, and she wore a small round hat with a single white goose feather and a gold tassel. She was slender and straight and dark and red-lipped and wide-eyed; but her coloring was so vivid that it hinted of rouge and the black crayon.

"She is made up," said Mr. Thane to himself, and couldn't take his pale eyes off her.

"What a superb young female!" thought Haven, and adjusted his eyeglasses.

Wilkins, by right of discovery, took her white-gloved hand and led her to the bed.

"Mr. Dent," said he very gravely, "unless I am mistaken this is your daughter."

"Father!" she cried, and went gracefully to her knees.

Dent reached out to touch her hair, but the goose feather interfered. She must have sensed the trouble, for she looked up and said: "Wait a second and I'll take the old hat off."

True to her word, she had it off in a second, and, after tossing it carelessly into a corner, resumed her position on her knees.

"There; that's better, ain't it?" said she.

"Letitia—my little Letty," whispered Dent. "Are you truly my little Letty, come to save and forgive me?"

"Sure, I'm your little Letty, dad," she said soothingly.

He lifted her chin with his hand and looked deep into her eyes, searching in them, perhaps, for something of himself, something of her mother.

"Lord God," he cried, "let me be certain!"

Then he lay back on the pillows with a sigh.

"Tell me," he said more calmly, "tell me about yourself—all you can remember. And about your mother, if you can."

Letitia drew a long breath and began.

"I was born," she said, "in 1893, in the little village of Green Lake, Montana."

"Yes," said Dent encouragingly, "go on—that's right—go on."

Wilkins, turning his back, looked out of the

window. He had heard this before. Thane and Haven exchanged glances and then each looked hastily away.

"My mother's name," the girl continued, "was Lucy Baxter—before she married you."

"Ah!" breathed Dent, with a sigh that was cousin to a sob. "Poor, poor Lucy!"

"She died," said Letitia simply.

"You remember—her death?"

"No; not very well. I wasn't nothing but a kid. I was four years old. Mrs. Dent—mother—died in 1897."

"Of course—you were too young."

"She died in Helena," added the girl.

"Yes," said Dent sadly, "I read the death notice in the paper. And you—when she died, what became of you?"

"I lived with some people that had a farm in the country. They was—they were very kind. They raised pigs and—and things. But I guess there weren't much money in it, because they were always poor."

"'Blessed are the poor!'" murmured Dent. "You will tell me their names some day, my dear, and they'll be repaid seventy times over."

"All right," she agreed, "only they've moved."

"We'll go out into the highways and hedges and seek them," said Dent in a sort of ecstasy.

"Sure," she nodded; "we'll have 'em paged."

Wilkins, by the window, cleared his throat.

"How long did you live with them?" asked Dent.

"Well, I beat it when I was eight. I got a job playing *Little Eva* in 'Uncle Tom's Cabin'—on the road, you know—one-night stands. We played Kansas and Nebraska and God knows what. I was the little traveller, I can tell you, at the age of eight."

"My poor girl," sighed Dent. "What a life, what a hard, cruel life!—and all my fault. Can you ever forgive me, Letty? I'll try to make it up to you. Now that I've found you, you'll never have to struggle and starve again. . . . What have you been doing recently?"

"Vawdvil," said Letty.

"What?"

"Vawdvil," she repeated—"two a day on the big time."

"Just what do you do?"

"Don't you never go to the theatre, dad? Why, I'm Vonnie Lesley of 'Lesley and MacGee—songs, dances, and repartee.' That's how our act's billed. See, it rhymes: 'Lesley and MacGee—songs, dances and repartee.' Good, isn't it? That was Tim's idea—Tim MacGee. Say, it's some act, too. Come and see it sometime—we're headliners out on the road, but here in New York, what with Sarah Burnhard and Lady Constantly Stewed-Richards and the Dolly Sisters, they've stuck us in just ahead of the acrobats. Competition's something fierce in this burg."

"My dear Letty," said Samuel Dent, "you needn't worry any more about competition. From now on my money is yours. You need not toil and slave for your bread any longer. Wilkins"—he turned to the lawyer—"arrange that my daughter shall be free from any further obligations to appear on the stage. I don't know much about such things, but do what is necessary and pay what is necessary."

Letitia half-rose to her feet.

"Hold on," she said; "not so fast. This ain't the speedway. I can't leave Tim in the lurch like that, and I wouldn't if I could. What do you suppose Tim would think of me, leaving him cold! No, sir. I'm Letitia Dent—but first, last, and all the time I'm Vonnie Lesley of 'Lesley and MacGee—songs, dances, and reparatee.' And, besides, there's other reasons."

"What are the other reasons, Miss Dent?" asked Wilkins, with raised eyebrows.

She seemed about to retort a little angrily; her eyes were not so wide, her lips not quite so full. But she evidently thought better of it, for a smile twitched the corners of her mouth as she answered very gently: "The other reasons, Mr. Wilkins, is that I'm engaged to be married to Tim MacGee. So you see it ain't likely that I'd quit the act, is it?"

This announcement called forth protest and ejaculation.

"Won't do at all—not at all," said Wilkins.

"Think of your new position in society," urged Haven.

"My dear young lady," said Thane, "this is very disturbing indeed, and if I may say so, unfortunate."

Samuel Dent, alone, said nothing.

Letitia pointed directly at Thane, who stirred uneasily in his chair.

"You can marry us—Tim and me—if you want," she said. "You're a minister, ain't you?"

Mr. Thane murmured that he was, but added that he thought the marriage undesirable.

"What!" she exclaimed, misunderstanding him, "you don't believe in marriage? You're a funny minister, you are. What *do* you believe in—free love?"

"Hush," said Wilkins; and Mr. Thane, very uncomfortable under her scrutiny, explained.

At last Samuel Dent spoke.

"We will do nothing hastily," said he. "Letty, you'll bring Mr. MacGee to the house soon, and we'll talk it over quietly and reasonably. I'm so glad to get you back, my dear little girl, that I don't ask anything more, and I certainly won't begin by making you unhappy. Before long, when I'm entirely well again, we'll have a long talk, you and I, and we'll decide what's best. Meanwhile you can do just exactly as you please about keeping on with your work on the stage. There, now, is that all right?"

She leaned over and kissed him loudly and enthusiastically.

"Fine!" she said. "That's the sort of stuff that gets over. And you're sure to like Tim, dad: he's just like you—he's a regular fellow."

III

THE next day Letty moved over from her West Side boarding-house, bringing with her a derelict of a hamper, two suitcases, and a globe of goldfish. A maid showed her to her room—one of the many hitherto unoccupied guest-rooms in the big house. It was furnished with white-painted wicker and blue cretonne, and was spotlessly clean and restfully bare.

"Needs a little livening up, I guess," was Letty's comment. "It's pretty, though—awful pretty, and the bathroom's just grand. When I get my photos stuck around it'll look very cosey and home-like."

She unpacked a most amazing collection of photographs, mostly of women in costume, smirking behind fans, or sitting stiffly in Gothic chairs, or emerging bare-shouldered and smiling from white fur rugs. There were some, too, of men in dress clothes, with varnished hair and large noses and small chins; and there were group pictures, snap-shots from Coney and Atlantic City, of giggling girls and their affectionate escorts. Then, too, there were half a dozen

pictures of Tim MacGee, all inscribed to "my dear little Vonnie, from Tim."

With all these Letty indubitably succeeded in livening up the room. When she had finished, every mirror was bordered with photographs, the bureau was covered with them; they dominated the mantelpiece, they almost papered the walls. They, and an indescribable assortment of crêpe paper cotillon favors, wrought an abrupt and decisive transformation.

She entered into her new life with great zest: each day brought some delightful surprise that called from her little explanations of pleasure. Chocolate and rolls served to her in bed in the morning, for instance; the use of the limousine with two men on the box; the Niagara that ensued when she turned on the hot water in the bathtub; the liveried footman that said, "Thank you, miss," when she gave him an order; and the chimes that that same liveried footman struck to announce luncheon or dinner.

"Say," she remarked, "this is like living in the Waldorf. Don't wake me up."

She saw a great deal of Samuel Dent, who had thriven mentally, physically, and spiritually since her arrival. His efforts to make her happy and comfortable were prodigious and pathetic; and in working for her happiness he seemed, in a measure, to forget his own former wretchedness and to throw off some of his religious fanaticism. She had assured him from the first that, so far as she was concerned, he

was forgiven. She bore him no grudge; on the contrary, she grew to feel a sincere affection for him, for he continued to prove to her that he was a "regular fellow."

At the end of the first week she introduced Tim MacGee. Tim was a tall, lanky, smooth-shaven, serious-minded boy, with a quiet sense of humor, and the shy, retiring manner of an assistant rector that was hard to reconcile with the exuberant, slap-stick confidence he displayed on the vaudeville stage.

"Honest to God, Mr. Dent," he said, "I'm tickled to death that Vonnie's landed soft, and I don't want to butt in and break up her party."

"Letitia seems quite willing to have you butt in, Mr. MacGee; she is very fond of you."

"Letitia?—oh, I see—Vonnice. Well, Mr. Dent, I'm nuts about her, just simply nuts. Of course, I'm not worth a wad of money yet, and perhaps I oughtn't—well, perhaps I oughtn't to stick around and expect her to marry me. But, say, Mr. Dent, we've got a swell act now, and it's getting across fine. I'd hate to lose Vonnie, Mr. Dent. She'd be a big loss to vawdvil—and a bigger loss to me, honest she would."

"I'm not going to interfere," Samuel Dent assured him. "I didn't bring Letitia here in order to thwart her in anything she has her heart set on; and as well as I can make out she has her heart set on vaudeville and you. You are a lucky man, Mr. MacGee."

"Gee, don't I know it!" he exclaimed. "I'm the human horseshoe!"

"Exactly," said Mr. Dent.

There was a short silence, during which you could almost hear Tim MacGee glow with pleasure.

"I want to ask you something, Mr. MacGee," said Dent at length.

"Shoot—I mean please do."

"Oh—er, first will you have some refreshment, perhaps?"

"I don't mind," said Tim.

Bagby brought Scotch and siphon and a tall glass with ice.

"I don't drink," explained Dent. "Doctor won't permit it."

"You ain't against it on principles," said Tim, hesitating; "because if you are, I can wait."

"No," said Dent smiling. "I was, once—but I believe I am getting more tolerant. Letitia has changed me a great deal."

"Well," said Tim cordially, "here's how."

"What I want to know," said Dent, after an interval, "is whether you think I am making Letitia completely happy. You see that is, at present, my sole object in life. Now, you understand her probably much better than I do—you have her confidence and you know what she enjoys. Is there anything you can suggest that I might do to give her pleasure?"

Tim meditated deeply.

"There's one thing," he said rather reluc-

tantly—"one thing that I've heard her wish for a whole lot of times. But I don't know whether you'd do it."

"What is it?" asked Dent, eagerly. "Of course I'd do it—anything at all in my power."

"Well," continued Tim, "it seems like asking royalty to drive in a hack, but, anyhow, I know it would just tickle Vonnie crazy if you'd do it—she's simply mad, Mr. Dent, to have you see our act from out front. Honest, Mr. Dent, she's got her heart on it. Would you come some night?"

"My dear boy," said Samuel Dent, "I'll come to-night."

"Cheers!" cried Tim MacGee.

IV

DENT, from that day on, attended twice a week the vaudeville houses in New York and its near vicinity where the team of Lesley and MacGee were billed to dance, sing and exchange repartee. Fortunately, at that particular season, he was never forced to travel further afield than Brooklyn or Jersey City; later, when the team should leave for New England, he foresaw a more difficult problem to face.

But it happened that they never went to New England; and this was due partly to Samuel Dent's generosity, partly to the leaping ambition of Lesley and MacGee, and partly to the turkey-

trot. I say turkey-trot advisedly, in lieu of fox-trot or maxixe or lulu-fado, for, remember, this was in 1912.

The project of starting a combination restaurant and dance-hall emanated from MacGee's agile brain. He broached it to Letitia one evening at the Palatial Theatre, while they were waiting to go on after the trained guinea pig.

"Honest to God," he concluded, "New York's got the dancing bug. They all want to die dancing, and they're willing to pay good coin for the kind permission. All we need is a floor and a booze license and the kopeks are ours. Then it'll be *our* turn to sit back and watch other folks make fools of themselves in public."

They put it to Samuel Dent as a strictly business proposition; they asked no favors. They would do the work; would he provide the money?

"We'll split the dividends fifty-fifty," explained MacGee. "And, at that, we'll all get rich."

Samuel Dent assented without a murmur, for he knew that it would keep his Letitia near him in New York. And thus was launched the now famous Carnival Garden.

Those were wonderful, glittering months in the spring and summer of 1912. Carnival Garden was a success from its inception—an unprecedented success—and Tim and Letitia were

jubilant. Dent's health became so excellent that he resumed his operations in Wall Street with something of his old-time carefully planned recklessness; and almost every evening he went to the Carnival Garden for a sandwich and a glass of milk. He was the only patron of the establishment permitted to drink anything but champagne. Between her dances Letitia would join him as often as possible — Letitia very lovely in a filmy, plaited scarlet gown, with a Dutch cap over her black hair and little black slippers on her nervous feet. And Samuel Dent would gaze at her out of tired, adoring eyes over his glass of milk; and he would assure himself that God had been very good to him in giving him such a daughter.

Something of Dent's new optimism may be inferred from the fact that in August he went heavily long of the market. But do you remember what happened to stocks during that fall and winter? For once Samuel Dent had chosen the wrong side — for once his judgment had been at fault. The ruin was ghastly and complete.

When the smoke of the disaster lifted somewhat, and it was possible to see just how much damage had been done, just what smouldering ashes of his once great fortune remained, there ensued a panic among his creditors. It was doubtful if Samuel Dent could meet his obligations. But he did meet them; he sacrificed everything that he owned to meet them, and

the effort left him shaken and shivering, too weak to begin again at the beginning, too old to venture into new fields.

When the Madison Avenue house with all its contents was sold at public auction, Samuel Dent and his daughter moved into a tiny apartment west of Seventh Avenue. Carnival Garden went merrily on with unflagging spirits, but Samuel Dent no longer sat at his table and sipped his milk. Instead Samuel Dent lay crumpled up on his bed—at home. Home! Oh, the irony of the word!

Letitia, with nothing to do until evening, was with him all day, and Bagby obstinately refused to be discharged. Bagby cooked the meals over the gas-stove in the kitchenette and Letitia served them; and every afternoon Tim MacGee came in for an hour to inquire how every little thing was. And, lo, Samuel Dent found that he was not unhappy, or, if he was unhappy, it was for Letitia's sake.

"I hoped to be able to give you so much," he said, "and this is what I have left to give. I don't see, even, how we can pay for this."

"You forget the Carnival Garden," answered Letitia. "It's bringing us in six thousand perfectly good dollars a year."

He laughed bitterly.

"I am living on my daughter," he said.

"Rats!" said she inelegantly; "if it hadn't been for you there wouldn't be any Carnival Garden—except in my mind's eye."

About this time, Wilkins, the attorney, wrote to her asking her if she would see him at his office. She went wonderingly but calmly, and she came away flushed with indignation.

"You great boob," she exclaimed in farewell, "do you think I bite off more than I can chew? Not Vonnie! *I'm* going to stick—see?"

Wilkins, it is to be presumed, saw.

V

IN January Samuel Dent suffered a second and last stroke of paralysis. Doctor Haven battled in vain; the combination against him and his medicines was too strong. Even Mr. Thane, whose visits had become less frequent and whose hopes of the new organ had been shattered, proved powerless; Samuel Dent died.

He died tranquilly, with no soul-searing lamentations on his lips, no fear of hell-fire in his eyes; and he died clinging to Letitia's hand.

"This has been a very happy year for me, Letty," he whispered.

"You bet it has, dad—for all of us."

"I'm leaving you nothing, Letty—nothing."

"You're leaving me your love," she said, and she bent and kissed him.

VI

WHEN it was over, Haven and Thane joined Wilkins at the club. Haven took a stiff drink and Thane ordered a milk and vichy.

"Well?" inquired Wilkins sympathetically.

"He's dead," said Haven with more feeling than he usually cared to reveal.

"He has departed this life," supplemented Thane.

"And Letitia?" asked Wilkins.

"She was with him," said Haven. "We left her praying at the bed. I wonder where she learned how to pray."

No one of them volunteered an answer.

"Well," said Wilkins after a silence, "I am convinced that we did the right thing. It did Dent a world of good——"

"It added a year to his life," interposed Haven, "and a very happy year, I think, in spite of everything. Dent would have died in torture had you told him that his daughter had died a month after her mother."

Wilkins nodded.

"And it certainly did Letitia no harm," he said. "She's a wonderful girl — wonderful. Don't see them like her often. You know, when Dent went smash I had her come down to the office and told her that, of course, he couldn't do much more for her—didn't have a cent left. I suggested that she was at liberty

to call the whole thing off, but—well, I offered to give her a little something out of my own pocket if she'd keep on playing the part. I felt sorry for Dent—knew that he had come to lean on her."

"What did she say?" demanded Thane.

Wilkins smiled slowly and meditatively.

"She said: 'You great boob, do you think I bite off more than I can chew? Not Vonnie! *I'm* going to stick—see?' And she wouldn't touch my money."

"No," said Haven; "she's a thoroughbred. I wonder where old Bagby produced her from."

"God bless her," said Wilkins huskily, and drained his glass.

"Amen," said Thane.

But in the little apartment west of Seventh Avenue, Bagby and Letitia sat watching over the dead. And suddenly Letitia threw her arms around Bagby's neck and burst into tears.

"Oh, dad," she sobbed, "do you think we made him happy?"

"I'm sure we did, dear," answered Bagby; "I'm sure we did."



'A YOUNG MAN'S FANCY

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JEAN FRANÇOIS, Marquis de Beauvoisin, was one of the Forty Immortals. At the age of fifty-two the honor of it sat lightly upon his erect shoulders; and yet he was not of those who are wont to accept responsibilities with a smile and a shrug. He was as painstaking with his obligations toward his neighbor and his nation as he was in regard to the metre of his verse or the care of his person. Nevertheless, to be a staunch Catholic, a fervent Royalist, and a member of the French Academy is, to-day, no mean accomplishment; for at the present date the Forty is composed of two ecclesiasts, four aristocrats, six Jews, and twenty-eight sons of French peasants who have become men of letters. Like Cincinnatus, they left the plough to lead an army; and the pens they wield are as mighty as his sword and doubtless as awkwardly handled.

People who knew them both have said that the marquis was as young at fifty-two as his son at twenty-eight. The comparison, however, is of little value, since no one had ever seen the two together after the son's unfortunate marriage to "that person from one of the Americas," as the marquis used to designate her. The

narrow old aristocrat had refused to attend the wedding, or to kiss the bride, although, goodness knows, she was kissable enough for the taste of the Bourbon pretender himself.

The marquis, then, after the death of his wife, lived alone on the Quai Voltaire, in an ancient hotel, the cracked, weather-beaten façade of which had overlooked the silent Seine for many generations—for so many, in fact, that it could afford to sneer across the river at the flaunting pavilions of the Louvre, as who should say: "Ha! Upstart! What right have you to preen yourself so finely over there? Who are you, my young one, to make so much show? You are naught but a hybrid and most of you is empire: *Nouveau, bah!*"

If I have stated that the marquis lived quite alone I must hasten to correct myself; for his roof-tree sheltered one other soul, his house-keeper, Eugénie. Eugénie, as her fathers (and mothers) before her, had been created to serve the house of Beauvoisin, and the marquis admitted that, like all old and faithful servants, she ruled rather than obeyed. His friend, Dr. Miromesnil, said that the marquis feared her wrath above that of any but God.

After the death of the marquise, Eugénie promptly seized the reins of power, and, unlike that of her fatherland, her government gradually changed from a republic to a monarchy, and thence to a tyranny. "*Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité,*" that hoarse, Utopian cry

of the people, meant naught to Eugénie. She was *par excellence* an aristocrat, referring to the estimable president of the republic and to his ministers and legislators as "*un tas de cochons*." Morning and evening she prayed for his majesty, the king, who was, of course, the Bourbon pretender, inasmuch as the Beauvoisins were of no mere empire nobility.

The marquis, though born and bred a staunch Royalist, found himself perfectly comfortable and satisfied under a republic. He was not long in making the discovery that it is in republican countries that the nobility are most esteemed and sought after. If people, as sometimes happened, taunted him with being the "silken poet of the republic," he was inclined to ascribe the term to the style of his verse rather than to the material of his shirts. As descriptive of his work it was not inappropriate, for his endeavor was to put into printed words the spirit that Watteau and his contemporaries had depicted on canvas. Whether he succeeded is not for me to say; I can but refer you to his "*Poésies Amoureuses*," published by Lafitte, and leave the judgment to you.

If ever the disturbing imp of loneliness entered into the spirit of the marquis's dreams, he betrayed it neither by word nor sign. He was as proud and withal as sensitive as those magnificent sires of his who had been dragged in the tumbril, smiling, to death; and yet those who knew him best (and Eugénie was among

them) realized thoroughly the double loss that he had undergone in the death of his wife and the estrangement with his son. When he sat down of an evening alone to his *crou te-au-pot* and his *entrec te* Eug nie was wont to shake her head sadly and remark that loneliness makes a poor sauce. And Eug nie had moments of insight.

It was on a certain sweet-smelling April night that the marquis, having dined, sat at his desk by the half-opened window correcting the proofs of a sonnet destined for *Le Monde*. His pen was travelling listlessly across the sheets, and he was not annoyed when his servant, approaching noiselessly in her hygienic sandals, thrust a flushed and excited face through the porti res. Before opening her lips she regarded the marquis with something in her eye that is difficult to describe—a knowing, admiring, villainous look, as who should say: “You sly old rascal, what a dog you are with the ladies, to be sure! And you in your fifties, too!” It is only Frenchwomen who attain this look, and they retain it long after the roses in their cheeks are painted and until their poor, sentimental old hearts have beaten for the last time. It was such a look that Eug nie cast upon him.

“A demoiselle to see m’sieu’ le marquis,” was all she said.

The marquis stared, thinking he had misunderstood, for she enunciated poorly with her two remaining teeth.

"A demoiselle to see m'sieu' le marquis," she repeated, and added: "*elle a l'air très bien. Elle a un chic—*" and up went her big, red hands to high heaven, doubtless in search of a superlative adjective.

"Her name?" ventured the marquis.

"She did not give it, m'sieu'."

"Tell her to come up," said the marquis shortly.

"At this hour—" Eugénie began.

"Enough," said the marquis.

The servant hobbled out muttering to herself: "It is that monsieur le marquis is still dangerous," might have been the trend of her remarks, but the marquis chose not to hear.

He was pretending to work when his visitor entered, so that he did not see until later that she was young and slim and fair; that she had Mediterranean eyes he might have written a dozen poems about; that she had a wide, humorous mouth, apparently made to reveal rather than to conceal two rows of white teeth as small as a child's. Later, too, he noticed that she possessed a child's dimple at each side of that smiling mouth. She was dressed as though she had just come from the opera—a cloak of dark-green velvet trimmed with ermine, which she held closely about her with her left hand.

"Madame," he said, and then, doubtfully: "Mademoiselle?"

"Monsieur." This with a short little nod and in a voice that would have been cold had it

not been warmed by the sunshine of those unquiet dimples.

"I may talk in English?" she inquired. "I am told that you speak it perfectly. My French is too shockingly slangy to be employed in the presence of an Academician."

"You may speak Chinese if you wish," he hastened to assure her, for she was quite irresistible. "Meanwhile give yourself the pains to sit down."

She sat down gracefully but abruptly—all her actions were abrupt—and the marquis perceived that she wore American slippers. Even then he suspected nothing.

She regarded him steadily for several seconds, her chin resting in her hand and her elbow on the arm of the chair.

"You don't look like a monster," she remarked placidly at length. "A bit pompous, perhaps, and a bit vain. I imagine that you think a great deal more of conventions than you should. If I were a professor of palmistry I should say that you allowed your mind to govern your heart."

"In your presence, madame," murmured the marquis, "my heart is perforce a slave."

"Don't talk like a book," she returned emphatically. "Oh, if you could only forget for one minute that you are a marquis de Beauvoisin and an Academician, and that all the women in Paris adore your poetry, and all the men laugh at it—because they do, you know—

I think that you would be a perfectly charming old gentleman."

It is to be doubted if the marquis relished the adjective.

"Madame," he said somewhat bitterly, "the *old* gentleman is overcome."

"I thought he would be," she replied and fell silent. Then she said, abruptly: "Aren't you ever lonely? Don't you miss having friends—relatives about?"

"My friends are my books," he answered; "they have proven more satisfactory than the only relative I have in the world. And then there is always Eugénie."

"This only relative is your son, is it not?"

"But yes, madame."

"Why do you dislike him so? What has he ever done to you that you should have discharged him like a servant? Don't you love him at all? Don't you love him if only on account of his mother who loved him and whom you loved? Oh, forgive me—I am taking great liberties in speaking to you like this; but you see, I am interested in this son of yours. He is everything to me that is glorious and beautiful in this world, and I feel that I robbed him of a father when I became his wife."

The marquis looked up at her sharply and his eyes softened; but he made no movement toward her. You could see Pride, hitherto firmly enthroned in his heart, doing battle with Sympathy and Admiration. "Are you about to

throw aside all your traditions," whispered Pride, "on account of the first wheedling petticoat you encounter?" The marquis declared the battle a draw and temporized. He regarded her closely for the first time, and found much to praise and little to find fault with. What was he to do? How should he answer?

Finally he hit upon the most unfortunate remark he could have chosen.

"Has my son," he said, "sent you to me to intercede in his behalf?"

"Not he," she retorted hotly; "he is a Beauvoisin, like yourself, and far too stiff-necked."

He puzzled an instant over "stiff-necked" before grasping its connotation. As he was about to speak she continued hurriedly.

"No," she said, "I have come here to ask you a favor—but it is a favor of a different sort. Paul, my husband, requests you to cease sending him an allowance—those fifteen thousand francs, you know."

"To cease sending it!" echoed the marquis.

She nodded her head vigorously, but there was a smile lurking in her eyes.

"Exactly," she said; "you have grasped it."

"And pray why does he wish me to cease sending it?"

"You see," she began, "it is a long story. Paul is very fond of you, but he is more fond of me. Does that surprise you? I hope so. In fact, Paul would have done almost anything in the world for you except give me up. But

there is just where the hitch comes. We feel that we ought not to live together on your money when you are not desirous that we should live together at all. Of course, I appreciate your position. I realize that I am nothing but an American, but it seems that my father was handling a railroad while you were handling a pen. I do not attempt to say which is the more lucrative; in any case the glory and the decorations are all on your lapel. But you have branded me as the daughter of a laborer, and hence not worthy to be the daughter-in-law of a poet. I wonder if you know how many poets were fathered by laborers."

"Excuse me, madame," interrupted the marquis; "pray do not allow this to become a discussion of the breeding of poets. God places them in every sphere of life, and the air that they breathe is neither that of the stable nor that of the salon, but the air of heaven. It is called the divine breath."

He felt immediately that he had scored, while she, for her part, rejoiced to have discovered a more human note in him. She rose to her feet and, coming quickly toward him across the room, seated herself on the arm of his chair and laid her hand lightly on his shoulder.

"My dearest father-in-law," she said, "you are quite, quite right, and you really have some very nice ideas—all of which persuades me that you will listen to reason; because, you see, I came not only to ask you to stop making us an

allowance, but also to beseech you to be friends again with your son. Now look at me! Am I such an impossible person to be the wife even of a Beauvoisin? After all, you know, you Beauvoisins are no great beauties. You, yourself, are sweet with your dear little pointed gray beard and your lovely mustaches, but your eyes are set too close together and your forehead is too high, and—dear me, you have lost a great deal of your hair. Of course I am not a paragon, but you must admit that I have all my teeth and am sound in wind and limb. Don't you think I am the least bit nice?"

She stood up and held out her hands—slim, white hands—and then laid them on his.

"I think," responded the marquis warmly, "that you are charming."

"Well, then," she continued briskly, "what is to prevent a reconciliation? We have a motto in America—in North America—which reads: 'United we stand; divided we fall!' Can you not apply that to the house of Beauvoisin and arrange a sort of Hague conference on a small scale? I, for one, am sure that you would rather have us around to bother your evenings once in a while than to play backgammon with some old spectacled high-brow. You *do* play backgammon, don't you?—and I bet that you consider it one of the world's greatest games of chance!"

"It is a game, I admit," said the marquis, "that I play with some success and no little

pleasure. Allow me, though, to hint that backgammon, my dear madame, has little if any connection with the subject in hand. Although I cannot say that your appeal has left me unmoved, you must bear in mind that treaties of peace are seldom proposed and signed upon the same day; also, may I state, that hitherto I have received no direct appeal from my son, and it is with him that I am displeased. Against you yourself I could and would bear no grudge; for, although it is doubtless your fault that you are a most charming young woman, the responsibility of your marriage must rest upon the shoulders of my son. I hope I have made myself clear without offending your sensibilities. I find myself in a delicate and difficult position, and, as I have suggested, I must demand full leisure to consider the matter."

The marquis arose from his chair and bowed low, a kindly smile on his lips.

"And now, madame," he said, "may we not consider the hostilities at an end, and a truce declared while we ponder the terms of the peace?"

The girl thanked him with shining eyes, rose to her feet to collect her belongings, gave him her hand to be kissed, and turned to the door. Once there she paused and looked back at him over her shoulder.

"Oh, I forgot to tell you," she said, "my name is Sarah; you and my other friends call me Sally."

He heard her footsteps go tapping down the stairs, and he sat alone, erect but rather wistful, behind his broad carved table with its litter of manuscript. About him floated like a sweetly subtle incense the scent that she used; and he sighed deeply as he turned to his work, for he felt very much alone.

It was not until the following day, however, that his loneliness was intruded upon by one of his few intimates, Dr. Étienne Miromesnil. The doctor entered with brusqueness that stamped him a man of energy. He wore, as usual, an immaculate frock coat with the red ribbon of the Legion glowing in the lapel. He was a heavy, much-bearded man and his small, gray eyes snapped and twinkled behind a pair of huge gold-rimmed eyeglasses. These eyes of his were the only indications his patients might have to lead them to suspect that he did not treat their imaginary ailments with the utmost seriousness; for the doctor was no disciple of the jocular bedside manner. Rather he became stern and monosyllabic in treating alike a cold or a cancer.

"To-night," he began without prelude, "I am taking you to dine with our friends, the Duc and Duchesse de la Tourelle d'Ivray. Madame O'Brian is to be there. She is a delightful woman who suffers occasionally from slight affections of the tonsils. Her case is not serious; indeed, she has survived her husband."

The marquis had risen, for to him all formalities were instinct.

"How do you do, Étienne?" he said. "I am truly pleased to see you. We dine where did you say to-night?"

"With the Duchesse de la Tourelle d'Ivray," repeated the doctor. "At present you lunch with me at Lapérouse."

"Why will you not lunch with me here?—it is more convenient."

"Here? Lunch here? Your Eugénie takes away my appetite. I continue to see those two remaining teeth of hers, and, in sympathy with her, I also find it difficult to chew the *château-briand*. Besides, she cooks abominably and there is no pepper in anything. No, we will lunch at Lapérouse."

So the doctor, as usual, gaining his point, to Lapérouse they went and seated themselves in one of the low-ceilinged rooms that look out upon the quay.

The doctor, no sooner seated, rose quickly to his feet and, traversing the room in a few quick strides, bowed low to one of two women who were taking their after-luncheon coffee at a far table. She smiled on him, nodded her head, and then, evidently in reply to some question, glanced over toward the marquis. Again she nodded and smiled graciously and forthwith the doctor returned to fetch the marquis to her.

"It is Madame O'Brian," he said, "and her

throat is much better. You must be presented to her. She is delightful."

The marquis had taken occasion to cast already an interested eye upon the lady in question. To a Frenchman all women are worthy of a glance, and, indeed, the woman who receives it not is crestfallen as a *débutante* whose first ball has been a failure.

Madame O'Brian was decidedly worthy of a glance. She was a widow of perhaps forty, without a gray hair, without a wrinkle except for a few tiny lines about her eyes that had doubtless come from too much good-humor; for she smiled often, and when she did so her lids came so close together that one could see nothing of her eyes save a narrow line of twinkling blue. Her hair was as black as ebony, but far brighter. Her lips I am afraid she rouged—oh, just a touch—but this hint of artificiality, which, indeed, was far from repellent, was offset by the comely naturalness of the tiny freckles that traversed the bridge of her nose from cheek to cheek. Irish she was, of course, for no Frenchwoman, thought the marquis, was ever guilty of freckles; and forthwith he decided that they were no blemish, but served, like the *mouches* of the Renaissance, to emphasize the true whiteness of the skin.

"And it's you that wrote 'Au Cœur de la Rose'!" exclaimed Madame O'Brian. "'Tis lovely poetry. I was reading it this morning.

I read the whole of the book in an hour and a half, with never a look at my French-English."

The marquis was somewhat shocked at the rapidity of the perusal and somewhat mystified as to the meaning of "French-English."

"My pocket dictionary," she explained, laughing. "It and Baedeker and the poor are always with me. Also, if she will excuse me for including her in such a gathering, Fräulein Hüpper, who speaks three languages fluently and not one of them English, for which the saints be praised!" Thus she introduced the placid German woman opposite her with a graceful wave of the hand. The Fräulein bowed her head stiffly and muttered things unintelligible in several different languages. Then she continued to drink her coffee with great zest and no little noise.

"But bless you, marquis," Madame O'Brian continued immediately, "there wasn't a word in your book that I had to look up! A child could have read it, and a child could have written it—oh, don't be after misunderstanding me; I mean it's the simplicity of a child and the sweetness of a child that you have put into the words."

"Madame," said the marquis, "you do me too much honor."

"Marquis," she answered, "the little I can do is not enough." And with that they separated, each much pleased with the other.

The doctor ordered a lavish luncheon and

ate like twenty men, as usual. The marquis was not hungry. Disturbing events had been crowding into his tranquil life of late, and he found that some of his staunchest prejudices were being woefully upset. Two American women in two days, and each of them as charming as the other. Was it possible, then, that Americans were not savages? Hitherto he had held them to be an uncouth, vociferous tribe, white-skinned, to be sure, and fully clad, but nevertheless little removed in mentality and breeding from the nose-ringed Hottentot. This decision apparently had to be reversed or at least modified.

The doctor spoke just before the salad appeared.

"Excellent book your son has just published," he said. "You will be having him soon in the Academy, I suppose." And he chuckled softly, for he was aware of the existing relations between the marquis and his offspring.

"Book?" queried the marquis. "What book? I have seen no book."

"It is called 'L'Indépendance,'" said the doctor. "The story of his own life, I should imagine. Don't worry, he's let you off easily; too easily, I think. In any case it is an excellent book."

The marquis made a mental note of the title, but answered nothing. There was a pause while the doctor devoured his endives. Then the marquis asked tentatively: "What is your

opinion of Americans—er, North Americans, I mean?”

“Charming people,” replied the doctor promptly, “charming people, charming ways, charming women, charming incomes.”

“Hum,” said the marquis.

After luncheon the two separated.

“You to hymn a lady’s limb,” explained the doctor, “I to amputate one.”

On his return the marquis found waiting for him an informal note from the Duchesse de la Tourelle d’Ivray, bidding him dine with her that night “to meet Madame O’Brian.” He was strangely pleased and despatched an immediate acceptance; and then he said to himself in self-defence: “One cannot seem to avoid these Americans; they enter everywhere.”

For several weeks after the dinner of the Duchesse de la Tourelle d’Ivray the marquis was a frequent visitor at the apartment of Madame O’Brian in the Avenue du Bois. Frankly and with no circumlocutions she had invited him to come to see her as often as he cared to do so.

“Do not come,” she had warned him, “on my days at home; there are too many people: penniless titles, and sticky musicians, and anæmic poets—no, you’re not anæmic—and out-cast Americans clad in cloth of gold. It sounds like the Tower of Babel with incidental music by Strauss. Come Friday at half-past five.”

That night the marquis walked home down the Champs-Élysées with strange, new thoughts

coursing through his brain. He felt delightfully bewildered and at the same time happily confident. He walked as a youth of twenty, inhaling with zest the cool, sweet air of the April evening. Already the green of the horse-chestnut trees was beginning to blur the gaunt outlines of the branches, and the soft, damp earth under foot had that elasticity that betokens spring. Ahead of him glowed the Place de la Concorde, a mass of garish light that paled the stars in the blue-black heavens.

He crossed the Pont Royal and then turned to the left down the quays. The river was high, swollen by the March thaws and April rains, and, as he leaned over the balustrade, it seemed uncannily near him. Some scrub trees along the opposite bank, immersed to their middles, cast uncouth, wavering shadows upon the discolored torrent. Overhead a pale moon swung behind a streaming cloud.

"Ah, *belle nuit d'amour*," sighed the marquis, "what is coming over me, I wonder. Is it what the Americans call so delightfully 'Indian summer,' or is it that an old man is becoming young once more?"

And, strangely enough, it was that evening that the marquis, as he unlatched his apartment door, felt himself to be sadly lonely in a very happy world.

During several days that followed Eugénie noted with alarm and no little indignation various changes in the habits and the conversa-

tion and the dress of her master. Prominent among these innovations were several suits of clothes from an English tailor in the Boulevard Malesherbes, and perhaps half a dozen pairs of shoes, *forme américaine*, from a bootmaker in the Avenue de l'Opéra. Also she bewailed the fact that the marquis carried a stick instead of his customary umbrella, and that, even on rainy days, he scorned galoshes.

"It is a child that he is," she lamented.

One fine April afternoon she shuffled herself into the marquis's presence, disapproval on her face and a visiting-card in her hand.

"*Est-ce-que m'sieu' le marquis peut voir cette dame?*" she said, still retaining the card.

"What lady?" the marquis inquired quickly.

"I know nothing," answered Eugénie; "it is the one that came before—the little blonde."

"Ah," said the marquis, "yes. Show her in."

It was his daughter-in-law, Sally, of course, with April roses in her cheeks.

"Where did you pluck them?" said the marquis, bowing low.

"Pluck what?" asked she, puzzled.

"The roses," answered the marquis, pointing.

She laughed, looking at him critically with her head on one side.

"Young man," she said, "may I ask you where *you* dropped ten years?"

"I think it must have been in the Luxembourg gardens this morning," he answered; "they are wonderful rejuvenators in springtime."

"Ah," she said, "so you feel it in your veins, too. Isn't it wonderful? How does it affect you I wonder. Do you pat dogs and kiss babies?—that's what I do."

"No," he said doubtfully, "not quite that. I — er — read Musset, and put my fur coat away in camphor and write maudlin verse that the editors are wise enough to return."

"Nothing more?" she insisted.

"Sometimes I throw open this window—thus—and look out at the sun shining through the trees on my old friend, the Seine. And I see the lazy barges and the excited little pleasure-boats go by down the river to St. Cloud, and Suresnes, and up the river to Charenton; and I watch that old gray-bearded fellow incessantly dusting and arranging his books there, on the quay; and that line of cabs, each with its patient horse hanging his head to reach his feed-bag; and the fat *cochers*, dozing lazily on their seats or hurling at each other terrible epithets out of the fulness of their hearts. And I wonder to myself whether all those charming people, men, women, and beasts, are aware that it is April, and that spring is about to dress Paris for her gala season. Ah, April! Blessed month of April! Month of sprouting grasses and bursting buds, and laughing children, and all growing things! Month of tears and laughter, of rain and sun—laughter dancing through tears, and each more beautiful than the other. Month of lovers walking hand in hand in gar-

dens, of birds singing to each other in the green-
ing branches, of children rolling hoops and fly-
ing kites in the damp, earthy paths. Month
when the good rain washes away the grime and
crime of the winter, and the sun gilds the dome
of the Invalides anew. Ah, Paris, let April
dress you beautifully that you may gladden the
hearts of the thousands of lovers who are soon
to whisper such wonderful things to each other
in your Elysian fields!"

"And you," said Sally softly—"and you?
Do you never wish that you, too, might whisper
something wonderful to some one—something
that would cause poor, susceptible Paris to
smile a little, and to cry a little, and to turn an
approving deaf ear?"

"Ah, my dear," said the marquis, "*I was*
young. Do you think me very old—too old?"

"Bless your heart," she said, "I'm not sure
but what I think you too young."

He turned from the window to find her stand-
ing beside him, her hand on his shoulder. The
scent that she used stole about him like a mist,
and somehow out of that mist there rose be-
fore him the face of Madame O'Brian.

"God of the Bow," he exclaimed, "they use
the same perfume! I am lost!"

He collected his wits with an effort.

"Forgive me," he said; "I have been talking
a great deal of nonsense for an old gentleman.
I am somewhat overwrought—nerves. I had
a restless night."

"No," she said, "I think you are in love. Tonics are of no avail; you must nurse it carefully." And she kissed lightly the tip of his mustache and left him to his visionings.

When a lonely gentleman of fifty-two has dreams by day, and when those day-dreams invariably resolve themselves into the portrait of a charming Irish-American widow, then well may Cupid laugh, for his aim has been true. But, naturally enough, the marquis was slow in realizing his malady, and it was well nigh the end of April before he summoned the courage and the resolution to recount his symptoms to Madame O'Brian.

She read his thoughts at first glance, for there was that in his eyes which admitted no misinterpretation. But, woman-like, she parried and evaded. With wanton cruelty she showed him a photograph of her former husband.

"It is six years now that he is dead," she said. "I mourned him deeply for eighteen months. But then it was my daughter that I had to be thinking of, for I had to be choosing a good husband for her, and young men avoid crape. I found the man, though—or, rather, she found the man."

She laughed and regarded him amusedly.

"He is lucky," said the marquis, "if the daughter resembles the mother."

"Will you listen to him!" she cried. "That is what we in Ireland call 'blarney.' "

"I had thought it a Gallic vice," said he.

"Perhaps," she answered, "but Gaul was once divided into three parts, and the Irish are Celts. *'In ipsorum lingua Celtæ, nostra Galli appellantur.'* So you see, I am as Gallic as you in spite of the fact that you despise me for an American."

"Ah, madame," the marquis hastened to assure her, "I admire your race. In particular I admire the women of it; and more particularly still do I admire one woman."

She tried to stop him, but he was not to be stopped.

"Margaret O'Brian," he said resolutely. "I admire you and I love you, and I need you, for I am a very lonely old man."

She looked at him and his heart rejoiced, for she looked at him with eyes that were soft. Nevertheless she demurred.

"Is it quite sure you are that you want me?" she asked. "We are neither of us young."

"Love is immortal," he replied, "and it becomes gray hairs as well as golden. It adds buoyancy to age and dignity to youth. It is the end, the goal of all breathing things. It is for love that God in His wisdom, made the spring-time, and, behold, it is even now May."

"But," she said, laying her hand on his, "I am an American."

"You are a goddess," he cried; "they are cosmopolites."

"And so," she said slowly, "you want to marry me in spite of my age, in spite of my

nationality, in spite of our brief acquaintance, in spite of my wealth."

"Are you wealthy?" he asked. "I did not know it; but I would marry you if you were as rich as Monsieur Rockefeller."

She smiled and he kissed her hand, and then rose, leaned over her, and kissed her lips. She still smiled—enigmatically, sphinx-like.

"There is one more thing," she said. "We shall have to ask your son and his wife to the wedding. Do you think they will come?"

"And why should they not come?" he questioned.

"Faith," she said, "it was you that would not think of going to theirs. Why should they be bothering to come to yours?"

"But," he said, at a loss, "my son married an American too. He is fond of Americans, and his wife is quite presentable. I know her slightly. She has honored me with a visit or two."

"And you? You have not honored them with a visit or two?"

He stammered in some confusion. She gave his hand a kindly little squeeze.

"There, there," she said soothingly, "bless the man. He is all excited. He sees himself as the kettle calling the pot black. Never you be minding, it's not Margaret O'Brian that will be scolding you, but it's Margaret O'Brian that will be kissing you and be helping you into your overcoat and sending you home. And when

you have asked your son and your daughter-in-law to meet her — why then it's Margaret O'Brian that will be marrying you; and God's blessing be on your head and hers."

The marquis was thus rendered the happiest man in Paris, which is perhaps next door to being the happiest man in Paradise. His Eugénie, toothless almost and sandal-shod, knew him no longer. For two days he strode about his little library in his new clothes, trying to whistle, attempting to sing, and radiating joy. And on the day preceding the reception, at which he planned to introduce his son and his son's wife to his delectable Margaret O'Brian, he summoned to him his house-keeper and cried: "Eugénie, to-morrow we entertain royalty; bring forth the fatted calf! *Igitur gaudeamus.*" Whereupon Eugénie once more raised her hands to high heaven and duly ordered an *escalope de veau*.

Mingled with the marquis's joy and anticipation was a certain anxiety which he strove to conceal even from himself; for, although a choice slice of the fatted calf may be the inevitable food with which to greet a returning prodigal who has sinned and is repentant, what one among us can cook the dish appropriate to the returning son who has perhaps not sinned, and who is certainly unrepentant?

But the marquis's fears proved unfounded. At four o'clock of the great day came Ma-

dame O'Brian, somewhat in advance, in order to see that everything was as it should be.

"Jean-François, Marquis de Beauvoisin," she said sternly, "I see fear written on your face."

"You have transformed it to admiration," said the marquis, gazing at her with all his eyes.

"I am glad," said she; "'tis the more worthy passion. But why *were* you anxious?"

The marquis swallowed hard, for pride is a huge mouthful.

"I fear," he said slowly—"I fear that I have wronged my son. I have been unjust. I disowned him when he married an American, and now I know that I should have gone on my knees and thanked God."

She came to him and kissed him.

"You are punished," she said. "You have atoned and are forgiven."

There was no time for more; Eugénie was ushering Sally and Sally's husband into the library. The marquis stepped forward to meet them. He laid his hands on his son's shoulders and kissed him on both cheeks.

"My son," he said, "I am sorry. Too much pride made me unfair."

He turned to look for Sally, and was somewhat disconcerted to find that she was kissing Margaret affectionately. It was then that he felt that something was afoot—something unusual and beyond his comprehension. It seemed to him as though he were assisting at some play

of the plot of which he was completely ignorant. He heard Sally say calmly to Madame O'Brian: "Dear mother, what a delightful family gathering." As in a dream he saw his son advance toward Madame O'Brian, kiss respectfully her hand and say equally calmly, though in dubious English: "My homages, madame, and all my compliments on your spring-time face."

Margaret kissed Sally and smiled on Sally's husband. Then she turned to the marquis, and, out of a black chaos of astonishment he heard her soft voice saying: "Yes, Jean-François, it was a conspiracy. But, faith, if you are one of its victims, it is Margaret O'Brian that's the other. We were too clever, Sally and I, and my heart is after punishing me. Sally, my daughter, you didn't warn me against this father-in-law of yours—you that knew him. And it's a poor weak woman I am."

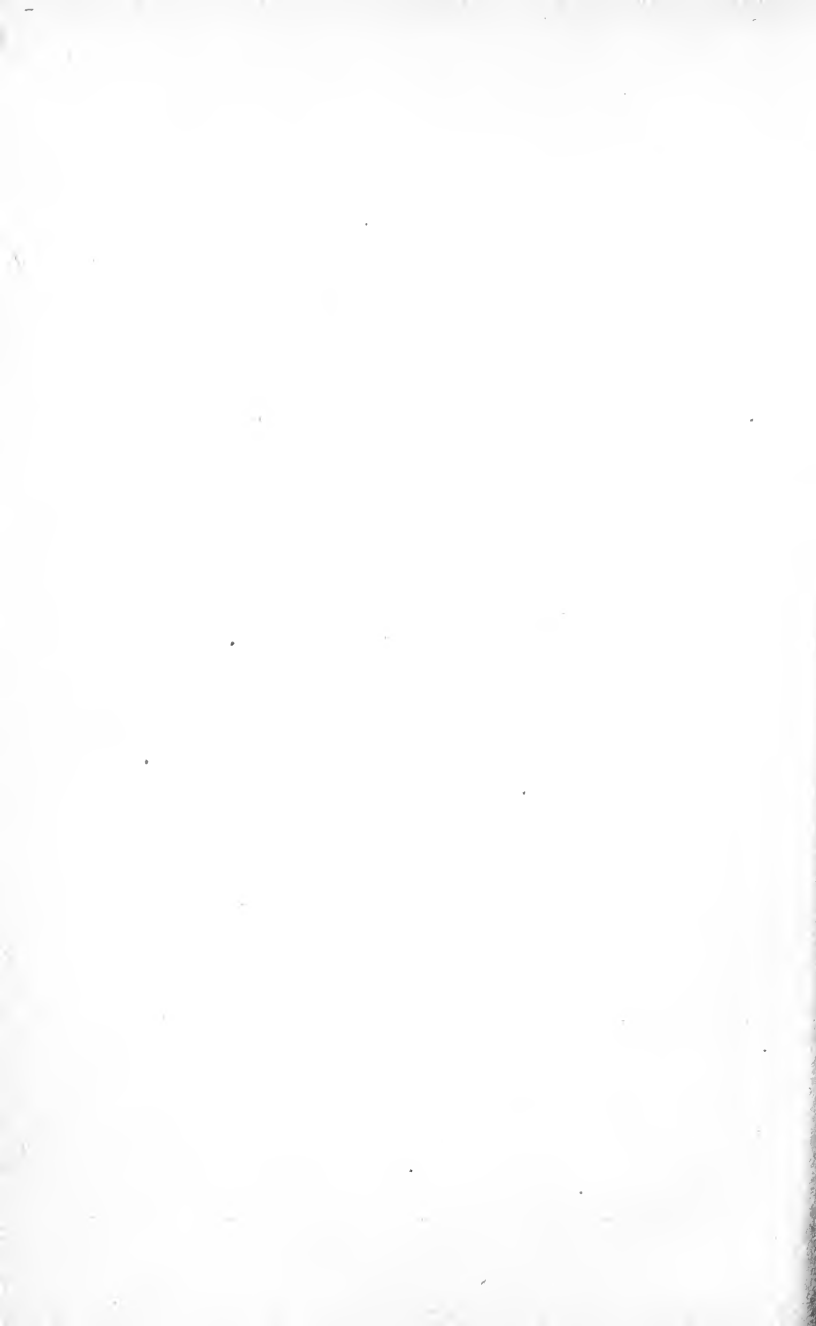
She stopped and held out her hands to the marquis.

"Will you have me, Jean-François, as Sally's mother or——"

"I will have you as my wife, Margaret O'Brian," said the marquis, and his heart was singing, for he knew that he would never be lonely again.



THE RETURN



THE RETURN

THE room was on the attic floor, a bare, cold little room wedged into the angle formed by the mansard roof. The one window that it boasted was round — *œil-de-bœuf*, the French call it—and stared, like an unwinking Cyclops, across the rue Clotilde at the Panthéon. At present it was securely shut, lest some gust of wind from the February night should steal in to flicker the candles. There were two candles—one at the head of the bed, the other at the foot.

Near the window was a wash-stand on which stood a tin pitcher and basin and a cracked glass decanter yellowed by long service. Against the wall opposite the bed was a spindle-legged table covered with a red-checked cloth and littered with cheap toilet articles—a brush, a comb, a button-hook, a tray of hairpins, powder, a half-used rouge-stick. On the same wall, from a row of hooks, hung a blue-serge skirt and jacket, a stained, rose-colored chiffon dress, a plaid petticoat, and a black cloak with some shabby fur at the collar. Then there was a chest of drawers, unpainted, lacking one caster and two glass knobs that should have served as handles. No other furniture except the bed and the two chairs by the bed.

On the chairs sat two nuns, calm, motionless, in their black robes. It would have been difficult to guess their ages: one was old, the other not so old; but both had ruddy cheeks and serene eyes. The elder, Sœur Cécile, was praying over her rosary; the younger—perhaps because she *was* the younger—was gazing compassionately at the figure on the bed; and on the bed, her arms folded across her breast, a crucifix of ebony and ivory in her fingers, peaceful in death as she had not been in life, lay Colette. . . . That was all—only Colette.

"*La pauvre petite*," sighed the younger sister; "she has suffered much."

Sœur Cécile completed her prayer before she replied. "*Et lux perpetua luceat ea. Requiescat in pace. Amen.*"

Then—"She suffers no more," she said.

"It seems always bitter when death comes to one so young," whispered Sœur Marie-Madeleine.

"It is not death," answered Sœur Cécile—"it is the beginning of eternal life."

"Of course," said the other, quickly. . . . "But look, see how beautiful she is—even like that, with her tired eyes closed and the color all gone from her lips and cheeks. It is only her hair that lives."

"And her soul," added Sœur Cécile, reprovingly.

"Yes, and her soul," agreed Sœur Marie-Madeleine.

"Let us pray that she walks with God," said the elder sister.

"Ah, surely she walks with God! Do we not know that she loved much, and therefore shall not much be forgiven her?"

"We know that she loved much, but we do not know that she loved wisely," replied Sœur Cécile with a trace of severity.

"Wisely!" began Sœur Marie-Madeleine, and stopped, abashed. She was silent for a moment, fingering the crucifix at her breast. Then she said: "You will write the letter, Sœur Cécile—or I?"

"It makes no difference. Either of us."

"You have the address?"

"Yes," answered Sœur Cécile, and she drew from her robe a folded sheet of paper. "Paul Androuet," she read, sergeant 17—th regiment, 8th battalion, 3d company, postal sector 92."

"That," interrupted the other, "is at Verdun. I know, because at the hospital I attended a *blessé* who had but recently returned from there. It is a post of great danger. Oh, Sœur Cécile, I fear for her Paul! Do you suppose she watches him now—from where she is?"

She bent over and smoothed back the dark hair from Colette's forehead.

"Poor little Colette," she whispered; "how much you know now of all the things of which we know nothing! Your eyes are closed, Colette, and yet you see far more than we. . . . Had you not better begin the letter, Sœur Cé-

cile? You remember how urgent she was about it."

Sœur Cécile nodded, rose from her chair, and commenced to search in the drawer of the dressing-table.

"Here is paper and pencil," she said at length. "It will do. . . . What shall I say—how shall I begin?"

Sœur Marie-Madeleine hesitated.

"I think," she said finally, "that it is well to be quite simple. Tell him that she is dead, and tell him how she died—calling his name. And tell him that strange thing that she said just before she died. You remember? 'Write to him,' she said, 'and say that I will be with him when he needs me the most.'"

"But," objected Sœur Cécile, "when she said that she was delirious from the fever."

"Nevertheless it was her request—her last request. Surely we may not ignore it."

Sœur Cécile shook her head dubiously but complied.

"There," she said; "and now it is finished. I am glad, for such a letter is not cheerful to write."

"Nor to read," murmured Sœur Marie-Madeleine.

"I will put it in the post on my way back to the hospital. You will be all right here alone to-night?"

"Yes," answered Sœur Marie-Madeleine.

"The candles are low, but there are more in

the drawer when it becomes time to renew them. And the woman down-stairs—the concierge's wife—promised to bring you up some supper. It is now six o'clock, so she should come shortly. You will not be afraid?"

"What is there to fear?" answered Sœur Marie-Madeleine. "It is not the first time I have watched over the dead."

"Then, good night, my sister."

"Good night. Do not forget the letter."

"Assuredly not. I have it here in my robe."

Sœur Cécile knelt for an instant by the bed, crossed herself, rose to her feet, and, treading quietly lest she disturb the dead, left Sœur Marie-Madeleine alone in the room. The flames of the two candles flickered violently with the opening and closing of the door, and a fold of the sheet flapped in the draft. Then all was quiet once more,

II

SŒUR CÉCILE posted the letter, but it was destined never to reach Sergeant Paul Androuet; for at six o'clock Paul, with a white bandage around his head, was on a train for Paris. That afternoon there had been an attack against a German trench in which the 17—th infantry played a prominent and heroic rôle. The trench had been captured, but it had

been a red victory and many of the 17—th did not live to be decorated. Sergeant Androuet, more fortunate, was promised a citation in the reports, for "indomitable courage and conspicuous gallantry in action." But, as if to counterbalance the stroke of fortune, a stray piece of shrapnel had hit him on the side of the head long after the trench had been won.

Protesting, he had been led to the dressing-station in the rear, the bit of shrapnel had been extracted and his head bound up. It chanced that his colonel was in the station at the time.

"It is a nasty cut that you have, my friend," said the colonel.

"I do not worry," answered Paul. "They have not got me yet."

"You did well to-day," continued the colonel. "How long have you been at the front?"

"Eighteen months, I think," said Paul.

"Ah! Since the beginning of the war, then?"

"Yes, my colonel."

"And does the prospect of the hospital delight you?"

Paul shrugged his shoulders.

"It is a question, I suppose, of but a day or two," he said.

"What is your opinion on that?" demanded the colonel, turning to the surgeon who had performed the operation.

"A week — two weeks. It is difficult to prophesy concerning a wound in the head."

"Precisely," agreed the colonel. "Now,

Sergeant Androuet, where do you live—where is your home?"

"In Paris," answered Paul.

"Good. You are granted then, two weeks' leave to return to Paris. I shall attend to the formalities. One rests better and recovers more rapidly at home than in the hospital. It is I who know it. *Au revoir*, my friend."

"*Au revoir, mon colonel, et merci*," said Sergeant Androuet, and, the bandaging being completed, he stood up and saluted.

He said to himself: "I must be calm. I must control myself. Otherwise I shall be a baby and cry." But he found that he was strangely weak, and in spite of himself the ignominious tears came into his eyes. The colonel, seeing what was amiss turned abruptly on his heel and left the room. The surgeon, with a sympathetic pat on the shoulder, said:

"There, my boy, run along. That train to Paris will seem to travel slowly, *hein?* Journeys are long when there is some one waiting for one at the end."

Paul smiled vaguely. "Yes," he faltered—"yes, you are right. . . ." Then he added in a whisper: "Colette, she will be waiting—yes, assuredly she will be waiting."

He staggered dizzily from the dressing-station. His head pained him—a dull, rhythmical, pounding pain that kept time to the beat of the pulses in his temples. The ground seemed not quite steady under his feet.

"I must appear to be perfectly well," he reflected; "otherwise they will not let me go. They will send me to the hospital and then I shall not see Colette. Of course, there is really nothing the matter with me—only a touch of fever, perhaps, from the wound. It will pass in the air."

Ahead of him was a two-mile walk to the railway station—a walk at first across shell-pitted country and then along a road which the German artillery did not neglect. Fortunately a passing ambulance caught him up on this road and offered him a lift. He sat hunched up on the floor of the driver's seat, glad of the opportunity to rest his head in his hands.

"You go to the base hospital?" queried the driver.

"No," answered Sergeant Androuet—"No. I go home. I go home—to Colette."

"*Veinard!*" said the driver enviously. "How long leave of absence did they give you?"

"Two weeks."

"H'm. Two weeks? Well, my friend, in case you can during those two weeks spare a minute from your Colette, will you render me a service?"

"But yes."

"In the rue Taitbout there lives a little woman called Blanche—Blanche Dorain. Will you go to her some day and merely say that Henri is well and—ah, *zut*, you know what to say! What you would have me say to your

Colette were I in your place. Will you do that?"

"Yes—certainly—I understand."

"*Merci, mon vieux.* That will give me great pleasure—and her too, perhaps. *Sapristi*, one is not always certain. . . . Here we are at the station. Good God, how content I should be to be going to Paris with you! A little dinner at the Taverne Tourtel, *hein*, and two good seats in the balcony of the Olympia! Like that one lives. Ah, well, when this sacred war is over. . . . *Au revoir, mon vieux. Bonne chance!*"

The train for Paris was already made up and was on the point of leaving; but Sergeant Androuet managed to find himself a seat in a compartment of the third class, between a priest and a *poilu*, who, like Paul himself, was returning home on a furlough. God knows, had it been necessary, Paul would have lain uncomplainingly on the floor. Paris and Colette and two weeks of blessed rest! He closed his eyes that he might the better conjure up her face. He had the feeling that if he thought of nothing but her the pain in his head would be soothed and the everlasting throbbing cease, as, of course, it was going to cease when actually she should lay her cool hands across his brow. Her cool hands—her cool, gentle, caressing hands! And her eyes that, when he was with her, followed him anxiously, as if eager to anticipate his every desire. No one had ever cared for

him like that before; no one, he thought, had ever been loved as he was loved by Colette. The knowledge of it had given him confidence, had caused him to hold his head high, had made a man out of him who was yet a boy.

The train stopped with a cruel jerk and he lifted his head and opened his eyes. He found that, for some reason or other his vision was blurred, as if he were looking through field-glasses that were not in focus.

"It is the fever," he reflected, and passed a surreptitious hand across his eyes in a vain attempt to clear them. Then, for he was still fearful to appear ill, he turned and addressed the priest as cheerfully as possible.

"Do you know when we may expect to arrive at Paris?" he asked.

The priest smiled slightly.

"That," he said, "is in the hands of God. Also it depends on how often we have to stop to allow troop trains to pass on their way to the front. You are impatient?"

"Yes," answered Paul, "I have not been home in eighteen months—and there is Colette."

"Your wife?" inquired the priest sympathetically.

Paul flushed. How senseless of him to have blurted out her name to strangers! What business, after all, was it of theirs?

"She is to be my wife," he answered very proudly.

"Excellent! Permit me to felicitate you, my son. She will be rejoiced to see you; and I am certain that that head of yours will heal more rapidly when it is she who does the bandaging. We French need God and a woman. When we believe in both we become heroic."

The train started again, and Paul, making himself as comfortable as he could, closed his eyes and slept. Sheer physical fatigue had conquered the feverish wakefulness of his mind. But from time to time his lips moved in his sleep and the priest and the *poilu* heard him whisper: "Colette!" And the priest and the *poilu* looked at each other and, understanding, smiled in sympathy.

III

THE train came clicking over the switches into the Gare de l'Est at about half past eleven that night. Neither the cessation of motion nor the unwonted clamor that poured in at the opening of the compartment-door, sufficed to rouse Sergeant Androuet from his heavy sleep. So the priest finally shook him gently by the arm.

"We are in Paris, my son," said he.

Paul opened vague, bewildered eyes.

"Is it already the hour of the attack?" he muttered.

"No, no," the priest reassured him. "Do you not know where you are? You are in Paris, where there is no more fighting. You have only to rest."

"Oh," said Paul. "I ask pardon. I forgot."

Then, as memory came back to him, he started eagerly to his feet, the glow of anticipation in his face.

"To be sure," he said happily, "to be sure! I remember now. We are in Paris! Ah, *mon père*, that is wonderful, is it not?"

But his very eagerness served to delay his departure, for, as he stood erect, a great wave of dizziness swept over him and he was forced to clutch at the priest for support.

"*Doucement, doucement*," said the latter, and eased him into the seat. "You must not be in too great haste. Remember, you have two weeks."

"I am better now," said Paul after an interval. "It is my head that plays me queer tricks."

"Take my arm, then, down the platform, and we shall see how you are when you reach the street. Are you expecting anyone to meet you? No?"

"No. I did not have time to inform Colette. It was so unexpected, my departure. . . . But she will be at home waiting for me. Come, *mon père*, let us walk faster. She will be waiting."

They came out of the station to the Place de Strasbourg, unlighted save by a thin moon and a dozen stars. The air was cold and heavy, and filled with that indefinable scent of the city.

"The good Paris air," said Paul, breathing

deep. "Already I am well. You have been very kind, *mon père*, but now, you see, I am quite myself again. I go to the Panthéon district. Do you come my way?"

The priest shook his head.

"No," he replied dubiously, "I go toward Les Batignolles. But you are sure you need no further help?"

Paul laughed—overexcitedly, perhaps, a little wildly—and raised his arms in triumph.

"Help?" he echoed. "Do you not see that I am strong! And in a while I shall be twice as strong—for I go to see Colette."

"Then," said the priest, "adieu. And may God bless you both."

"He will," answered Paul.

They parted, Paul following the Boulevard de Strasbourg and the priest striking off at the Boulevard de Magenta.

The streets were almost deserted—the desolate, hushed streets of a sleeping city. But an occasional search-light flashed a strip of gold across the sky to prove that there were some who did not sleep. In a near-by courtyard a cat screamed horribly, like a child crying in pain. At the sound Paul stopped, his knees shaking, all his vaunted strength gone from him.

"Nerves," he murmured—"nerves. I must not let that happen again. I am foolish. I, who have slept while the Boches turned loose all their artillery, I start and tremble because

a cat howls in the night. . . . Ah, now when my heart starts to beat again the pain comes back in my head. That is annoying; I had thought myself rid of it."

He was not rid of it. His head burned as if some devil had bandaged it with a fillet of hot steel. With an effort he resumed his march, now on the Boulevard de Sebastopol. In the Place des Arts et Métiers an *agent de police* eyed him suspiciously and then demanded his name and regiment and a look at his furlough.

"You are out late, my friend," he said, when these formalities had been completed.

"Yes," answered Paul, "I am late. You will pardon me if I hurry along."

When he reached the Seine he was exhausted. He paused on the Quai and, leaning his elbows on the stone balustrade, put his face in his hands. His hands were very cold; or was it his face that was very hot?

Looking across at the Ile de la Cité, he saw lights glowing dimly through the stained-glass windows of Notre-Dame.

"I will go in and rest a while," he said. "Otherwise I shall never be able to reach the rue Clotilde and Colette." And then he remembered the day on which he had been called to the colors, when he and Colette had knelt in the cathedral, he enthusiastic and confident and heroic in scarlet and blue, and she—well, she had, in spite of herself, not been able to

share all his confidence, and he had caught her crying, silently and secretly. . . .

It happened that midnight mass was being celebrated in Notre-Dame — a quiet, solemn mass, attended mostly by soldiers in uniform and by women in black. Sergeant Androuet, with a stained bandage around his head, and his horizon-blue uniform caked with mud, did not find himself out of place in that congregation. He fell into a seat at the back of the church, near the *Porte de la Vierge*. Gradually the heavy odor of the incense and the monotonous chanting of the priests exerted their soothing effects; a great drowsiness came upon him, the lights grew dim through his half-closed eyes, his head sank forward, his arms relaxed and drooped to his sides, and he fell into a deep sleep—a sleep so profound and so deep that it was akin to death. . . .

He did not know how long it was before he was aroused by a hand on his shoulder. He looked up, rubbing his blurred eyes. The cathedral was in darkness, save for the lights on the altar, and empty, save for a few women who had remained in the dim corners to pray.

Once more the hand pressed his shoulder, and he got painfully to his feet. Then he realized that it was a woman who had aroused him; then, peering more eagerly into her face, he knew that it was Colette.

"Come, Paul," she said, "the mass is over and we will go home."

"Colette!" he whispered—"Colette!"

"Yes," she said, "it is I—it is Colette, come to fetch you home." And she drew his arm through hers and led him, tottering and dazed, to the door. At the font she halted, dipped her hand in the holy water and offered it to him. He touched his fingers to it and crossed himself.

"There," she said, "that is well done."

Unconsciously he paused, that she might perform the act for herself; but she shook her head at him, smiling a little.

"No," she said quietly—"for me it is too late."

They went out and down the steps.

The night had cleared, the wind had subsided, and as Paul looked up he saw the stars reeling in the sky.

"I am very tired," he said plaintively, like a child. "I have been a little wounded, Colette, and I am very tired. I want so much to rest."

"It is not far, now," she reassured him, "and when we arrive you shall rest."

"It will be good to rest," he sighed.

Slowly, with great difficulty, they proceeded, he leaning heavily on her, she supporting him with what seemed superhuman strength.

They crossed the Boulevard Saint Germain at the Place Maubert. They met no living thing. They were so alone that they might have been crossing a desert—a desert flanked by grim, gray walls.

"It is not gay, your Paris," said Sergeant Androuet. And he repeated: "It is not gay. Is it that every one is dead?"

"Not every one," she answered.

"You are still in the rue Clotilde?"

She hesitated, but he did not notice her hesitation. Then she said: "Yes, you will find me in the rue Clotilde."

"Alone?" he inquired

She shook her head.

"There is a sister with me—Sœur Marie-Madeleine."

"You have missed me, Colette — much? — a little?"

"Much. But I shall be alone no more. . . ."

IV

AT half past twelve that night Sœur Marie-Madeleine rose from Colette's bedside to renew the candles which had for the second time burned down to their sockets. She was weary from the long watch, and more than once her eyes had drooped over the missal, and for a space she had thought pityingly of the dead girl over whom she was watching. She felt *le bon Dieu* would be very kind to Colette.

When she had substituted the long candles for those that had burned low and had resumed her chair, she heard the concierge's bell ring through the quiet house. Presently, she heard the click of the opening door — then a short

silence. Then laboring footsteps on the stairs. She wondered a little that any lodger should be returning so late at night, for at that hour the authorities did not encourage people to be abroad who had no business to be.

The footsteps continued to ascend, gropingly, unsteadily—the footsteps, perhaps, of a drunken man. Sœur Marie-Madeleine opened her missal with a sigh. Then hastily she put the book aside. The lodger had lurched to the door and was fumbling with the knob. She must prevent his entrance at any cost—it would be sacrilege in this room of the dead. . . .

Before she could intervene the door opened and a man reeled in—a man in uniform, with a bandage about his head; a young man, not unhandsome; a young man with glazed eyes and burning cheeks.

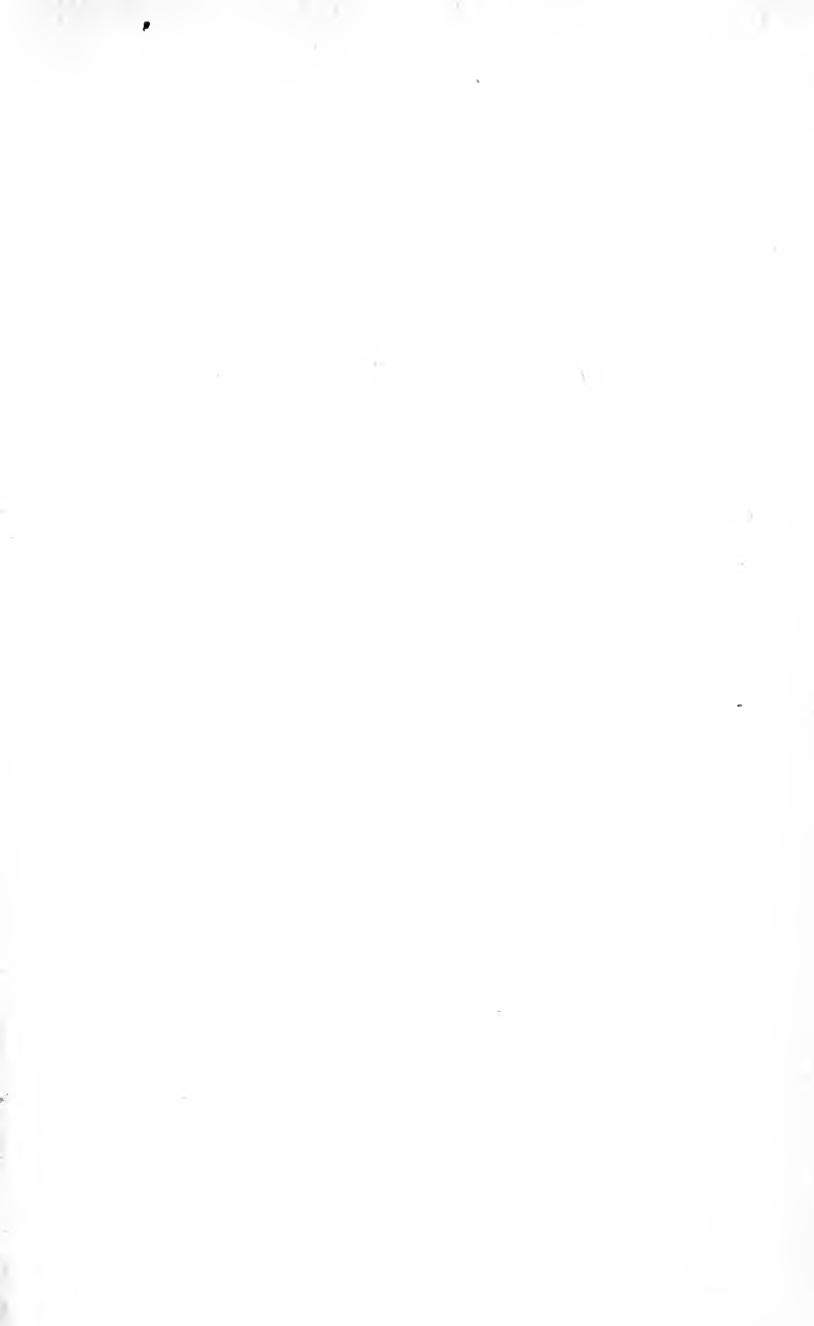
“You must not enter—” she began, and pointed to the bed.

Those dim eyes of his followed the direction of her hand. The man halted, drew himself up with his back against the wall, stood there an instant, erect, staring.

Then he held out his arms toward the dead girl.

“Colette!” he cried—“Colette! I am going home to see you!”

He fell to his knees, his arms sprawled across the coverlet. His body shook with the pain of breathing. Then, quietly, he slipped to the floor and the pain of breathing ceased.



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